

SMALLER, SAFER, SANER

Successful Schools



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NATIONAL CLEARINGHOUSE FOR EDUCATIONAL FACILITIES, WASHINGTON, D.C.

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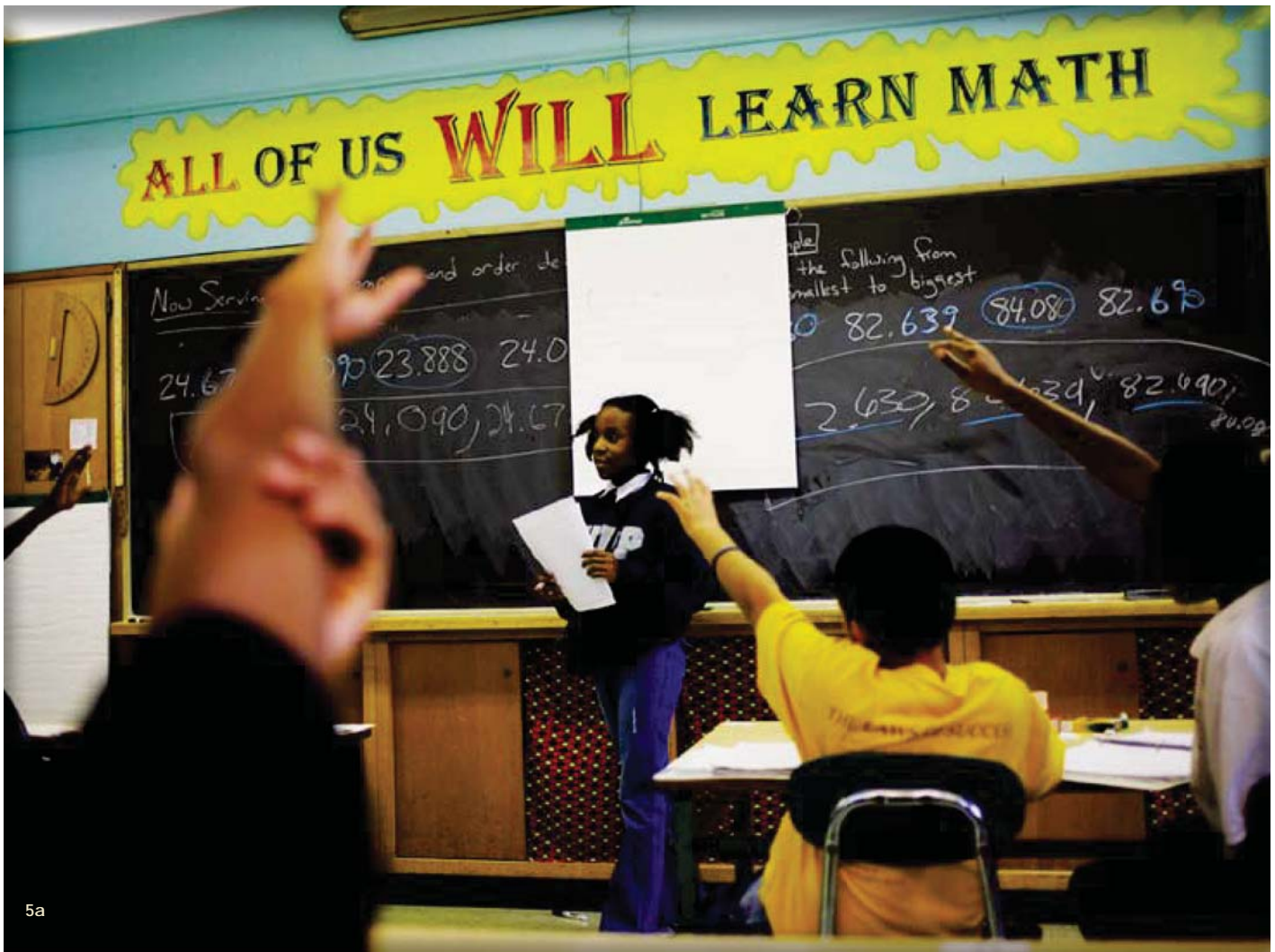
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Research Summary





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Executive Summary

More than \$20 billion a year currently is being spent to construct public schools. Hundreds of billions are being spent to carry out public education. Everyone wants the best possible use of that money. Families want safe, nurturing, challenging, and effective schools for their children. Community members and policy-makers want schools to be successful, and to make efficient use of their tax dollars, regardless of how much is spent. This booklet is designed to help make those things happen, by giving readers opportunities to learn from some of the most effective, innovative district and charter public schools in the country.

We can make significant progress toward what Americans want by using ideas from the finest small schools and schools that share facilities. This report combines profiles of district and charter public schools from all over the United States with a research summary, showing how educators and community members have created these schools. Because more than 50,000 people “downloaded” or purchased a copy of the original, 2001 report, we have revised and updated this edition.

THE REPORT PROVIDES BRIEF CASE STUDIES of 22 public school buildings in 11 states: Arizona, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Illinois, Massachusetts, Minnesota, New York, Ohio, Rhode Island and Texas. These buildings house almost 50 schools and social service agencies. The profiles that follow represent urban, suburban, and rural communities throughout the United States. These schools serve a vast array of youngsters. They are united in their ability to improve achievement and behavior in safe, nurturing, stimulating environments.

The key conclusions of this report are:

1. SMALLER SCHOOLS, ON AVERAGE, CAN PROVIDE

- a safer place for students
- a more positive, challenging environment
- higher achievement
- higher graduation rates
- fewer discipline problems
- much greater satisfaction for families, students, and teachers.

2. SCHOOLS THAT SHARE FACILITIES WITH OTHER ORGANIZATIONS CAN OFFER

- broader learning opportunities for students
- high quality services to students and their families
- higher student achievement and better graduation rates
- ways to stretch and make more efficient use of tax dollars.

OF COURSE, NOT EVERY SMALL SCHOOL IS TERRIFIC. And being small is not enough – that’s why the profiles describe key elements of the schools, along with being small.

WE BELIEVE, AND WE HOPE, THAT THIS IS AN ENCOURAGING USEFUL REPORT.

These schools show how to provide much more effective education for students. And they help show how small schools and those that share facilities can be much more satisfying places for teachers. This is a critical issue as the nation considers how to attract and retain teachers.

THIS IS NOT A REPORT ABOUT EDUCATIONAL THEORY. It is a study about how real, existing schools can help the nation offer saner, safer, smarter, better public education.



"The value of small schools has been confirmed with a clarity and a level of confidence rare in the annals of education research." (Raywid) Photo illustration, 5a: KIPP School in New York, 6a: Withrow University High School in Cincinnati is a classic example of a large district school that was not successful until it reopened as a cluster of small schools; 7a: Arizona Agribusiness and Equine Science Center, Phoenix, Arizona. All are featured in this report.

Summary of Research ON SMALL SCHOOLS AND SHARED FACILITIES

School buildings are getting more attention and they should. A school's size and the groups with whom a school shares space can make an enormous difference for students, families and the broader community. Whether located in an urban, suburban, or rural area, small schools are safer and, in general, students in small schools learn more. Moreover, school buildings that share space with other organizations can provide youngsters with a better education and use taxes more efficiently. These are some of the key lessons people throughout the United States are learning. This report shares their stories.

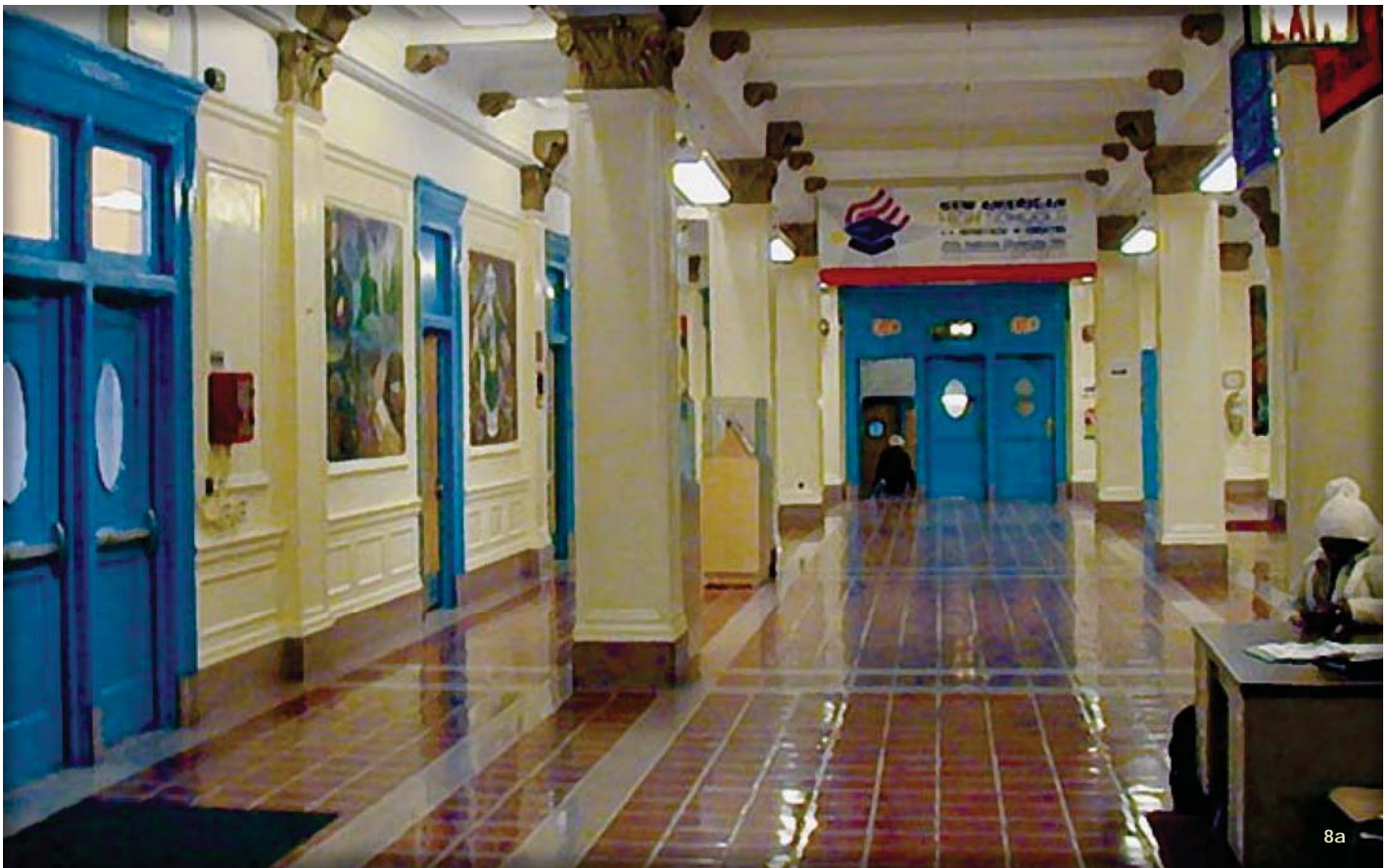
Given the enormous sums of money being spent on school

construction, this is a critical time to discuss how the money will be spent and what type of buildings will be constructed. Public school districts are spending billions of dollars on school construction. A survey of about 16 thousand public school districts found that they spent about \$23 billion in 2005, and \$25.3 billion in 2006. An estimated \$51 billion will be spent between 2007 and 2009. Meanwhile, colleges and universities spent more than \$11 billion in 2006. Estimated higher education institution spending will be more than \$45 billion 2007-2009 (Agron, 2007). Moreover, these figures do not include construction expenditure for the more than 4000 chartered public schools in the U.S., some of which are

constructing new buildings (Agron, 2007b)

Imagine a small, inner city public secondary school deeply interested in the best ideas of Asian and American education that starts every class with teachers and students bowing to each other, praising each other for their efforts. The school begins every day with a 20-minute assembly, during which students are rewarded for persistence. This public school produces students who have among the state's highest test scores, even though this inner city school is open to all.

Imagine a rural secondary school that begins the school year with an individual family-student-teacher conference, asks students to make





public presentations every six weeks, expects virtually all students to take at least one college class before graduating, and provides each student and faculty member with a computer and desk that they can personalize with pictures of family, friends, and favorite hobbies. The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation gave this school more than \$7 million to replicate itself because of its great success.

Imagine an inner city district that converts several of its most troubled large high schools to small public schools of choice. This helped produced major gains in graduation rates and an elimination of the graduation gap between white and African American students

Imagine rural or suburban fitness centers, built as part of a high school, paid for in part with school, and city funds. They are open 18 hours a day and offer more than either the school districts or towns could afford by themselves.

None of these schools is imaginary. You will learn more about these and other remarkable schools in this report. Educators, parents, and community leaders in these rural, urban, and suburban communities looked at

the best available research and experience about small schools and shared facilities. Then they used it. They have much to teach us.

We have tried to combine research with reality. This report is designed for parents, educators, school board members, legislators, business, and community groups—for anyone considering the role a school building can play in the lives of young people and the development of a community.

Over the last fifteen years, researchers have concluded that smaller schools provide many benefits—achievement, attendance, graduation rates, and behavior all tend to be better in small schools. This is true in urban, rural, and suburban areas. The research we share questions the tendency over the last 20 years to build even larger schools. Along with research, tragedies like Columbine High School showed that there are problems, as well as strengths, when communities create huge schools.

Families and young people face many challenges. Some communities have developed shared facilities, in which schools share space with social service agencies, or other

organizations to help provide a more effective education for young people. By sharing space, educators, students, and citizens can gain a wider range of programs and services.

This report contains four major sections. The first offers a brief summary of the benefits small schools offer to students and educators. The next section discusses experiences with shared facilities. The third describes school facilities nationwide that appear to be making good use of this research. The final section lists resources that can provide additional information.

No one would describe the schools cited in this report as perfect. But they have excellent records of

The research we share questions the tendency over the last 20 years to build even larger schools. 8a: Julia Richman Education Center, New York City. 9a: High performing small schools like Cesar Chavez Academy often also emphasize the arts, including this performing group.

improving achievement, increasing attendance, and providing other benefits to students and the broader community. Former New York Times reporter Gene Maeroff described the dramatic positive impact partnerships among educators, business people, parents, and other community members are having on young people. To indicate the power of well-designed partnerships, the book was called *Altered Lives*. We hope

Smaller high schools are more engaging environments and produce greater gains in student achievement. 10a: Clark Montessori, Cincinnati, Ohio. 10b: Minnesota New Country School, Henderson, Minnesota



Research on School Size

The positive effect of small schools has been known for years, but it was not until the last decade that studies found a strong relationship between higher academic achievement and lower enrollment (Eckman and Howley). A research summary commissioned by the U. S. Department of Education was clear. It notes that the value of small schools in increasing achievement, graduation rates, satisfaction, and improving behavior has been “confirmed with a clarity and a level of confidence rare in the annals of education research” (Raywid 1999: 1).

Another study found “a large body of research... (that) overwhelmingly affirms the superiority of small schools” (Cotton). A 2007 report on small district high schools in Boston, called “Pilot Schools” found that the Pilots’ students “outperform students from other non-exam Boston Public Schools on every standard measure of engagement and performance for every racial, economic, and academic subgroup examined. Pilot high school students show better MCAS scores, higher attendance rates, higher promotion rates—and the four-year graduation rate for 2006 was more than 23 percentage points higher than the rate for BPS students, 75.7% as compared with 52.2% for BPS.” (Tung and Ouimette).

When an entire district decides to adopt a strong small schools strategy, exciting things can happen. Beginning in 2000, with help from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation,

the Cincinnati, Ohio Public Schools, created small schools in several troubled large high schools. Small was not enough. The schools focused their staff retraining efforts on reading, writing and methods of working with urban students. Some administrators were replaced. Principals were able to select staff, with help from teams at the schools. The district’s four-year graduation rate increased from 51% in 2000 to 79% in 2006. Not perfect, but much better. Moreover, the high school graduation gap between white and black students was eliminated. (Bowers, Nathan, 2007).

Amistad Academy (a charter public school) in New Haven, Connecticut and Withrow University (a Cincinnati district school) are great small public schools, open to all. Both enroll significant percentages of low-income students. Both have academic achievement that equals or exceeds most suburban schools serving a very different group of young people.

Professor Anthony Bryk of the Center for School Improvement of the University of Chicago analyzed studies from all over the country examining the relationship between school size, cost, and quality. He found... “smaller high schools are more engaging environments and produce greater gains in student achievement... smaller schools are more productive work places for both adults and students. In these more intimate environments, teachers are more likely to report greater satisfaction with their work, higher levels of morale and greater commitment. Problems of student misconduct, class cutting,



11a



11b



11c

The best small schools emphasize individual attention and close adult/student working relationships, along with high academic expectations.

absenteeism, and dropping out are all less prevalent" (Bryk 1994: 6–7).

Chicago small schools activist Susan Klonsky wrote, "...small school size is not merely an architectural issue but also a social justice issue...the contemporary movement for small public schools is rooted in the civil rights movement in the South." She believes effective schools "find ways to make each child visible and well known to the adults who will teach her; (and) offer each teacher a place in a strong professional community of educators. Neither of these two big relationships can be attained in large impersonal institutions, where anonymity is the order of the day." (Klonsky)

Some studies show how small schools have special benefits for students who are at risk or disadvantaged (Eckman and Howley). The correlation between poverty and low achievement can be up to 10 times higher in larger schools than in smaller schools.

But the value of small schools is not limited to low-income communities. As the (suburban) School for Environmental Studies shows, even affluent youngsters can gain from attending a small school. Moreover, some people assume that virtually all students in large suburban high schools will do well. A study of Minnesota public high schools found that all 50 high schools with the smallest percentage of graduates taking remedial courses on entering Minnesota public colleges and universities 2000-2003 were rural. Moreover, 45 of these 50 high schools were quite small (Nathan, 2006).

Without denying that

TEACHER REPORTS OF DAILY, WEEKLY OR MONTHLY INCIDENTS BY (TRADITIONAL URBAN) SCHOOL SIZE		
Type of Incident	200-749 Students	1200 or more Students
Robbery/Theft	21%	50%
Vandalism	18%	44%
Possession of weapons	2%	12%
Verbal Abuse of Teachers	30%	57%
Use of Illegal drugs	5%	45%
Use of Alcohol	4%	39%
Widespread disorder in classrooms	15%	29%

large suburban high schools help many students, this study suggests that the kind of focused curriculum, high expectations for virtually all students, and close working relationship often found between small schools and families can be very valuable for many students, not just from low income families.

Some argue that large schools will be able to offer a larger number of courses. But the number of course offerings have little relationship to student success. The quality of instruction is the most important determinant of student achievement and has no relationship to the number of courses offered (Eckman and Howley).

WHAT ABOUT COST? The classic argument is that even if large schools are not more effective, they are cheaper. This is not necessarily so. A 2005 report from the Cincinnati based KnowledgeWorks Foundation asks "Can small schools actually be built and run at a cost per pupil that is comparable to that of large schools?" A resounding "yes." (Lawrence, et. al.) The report describes 25 good small public schools that are not more expensive to operate than comparable large schools.

A study published in 2007 analyzed data from the 2003-2004 National Survey of Schools and Staffing. The study found dramatic differences in many areas related to school safety – Faculty at urban district public schools enrolling 200-749 students were much less likely to report daily, weekly or monthly incidents of robbery, theft, vandalism, verbal abuse, or use of illegal drugs or alcohol. (Hill and Christensen, p. 61)

The Minnesota School of Environmental Science (or "Zoo School") with its student body of 400 was carefully designed to cost no more per pupil than other large high schools built in the same district. A New York City study found that smaller high schools cost somewhat more per pupil to operate, but when the cost of the school per graduate is calculated, smaller academic and alternative schools were less expensive than large high schools (Stiefel).

Sometimes school consolidation advocates don't take into account the potential for increased transportation costs. Students who walk to a neighborhood school get more exercise, and can save energy costs. Consolidation also can produce new

costs for athletic equipment, band uniforms, new textbooks, Etc. (Lawrence, et.al p. 13)

What about economies of scale, which some offer as an important argument for large schools? Bryk concludes

...The envisioned economies of scale here, however, are actually quite illusive. Moreover, whatever marginal efficiencies may be extracted is dwarfed by the overall ineffectiveness of these institutions. While school districts that are currently saddled with large physical plants might productively move toward schools-within-schools, there is little reason to continue to build more buildings like this. In light of the positive consequences for both adults and students associated with working in small schools, the reality is one of a dis-economy of scale (Bryk 1994: 6–7).

There are several ways to create smaller learning environments. One approach is to create a separate, freestanding small school. There are a number of excellent examples from urban, suburban, and rural communities. See, for example, the profiles of Academy for the Pacific Rim, the

School for Environmental Studies, and Minnesota New Country School. Some urban and suburban communities have created small schools within large buildings. The Julia Richman building in New York City, and Withrow High School Campus in Cincinnati, are good examples. Boston public school teachers created two Pilot small schools in a large building across the street from Fenway Park, the city's major league baseball stadium. A recent report offers guidelines on how to convert a large building into small schools (Fouts, et. al)

A growing number of communities around the country are creating small schools within larger schools to help students and teachers. The biggest value seems to come when they are designed as distinctive schools of choice, rather than "houses," which often are clones of each other.

The structure of a small school generally fosters a sense of community among teachers and students (Bryk and Driscoll). Small schools are founded on the idea that the success of a school is linked to its size. By keeping en-

rollments small, students receive more personalized attention and the school is more manageable (Joravsky). Small schools can be more responsive to needs and learning styles of individual students so they are

- more academically productive (Lee and Smith; Lee, Smith and Croninger),
- more likely to participate in after-school activities (Barker and Gump; Lindsay)
- less likely to drop out of school (Pittman and Haughwout).

As the nation considers the importance of attracting and retaining teachers, small schools can play a key role. A number of studies concluded that teachers in small schools are much more satisfied than are teachers in large schools (Bryk, Raywid). A study of more than 2,400 Midwestern superintendents shows they recognize the importance of small schools in retaining faculty. In fact, urban, rural, and suburban superintendents whose districts have restructured schools to make them smaller rated this action the single most effective way to retain teachers (Hare).

The quality of instruction is the most important determinant of student achievement and has no relationship to the number of courses offered.

13a: Faculty of Frederick Douglass Academy, New York City.



13a

Many of the most successful small public schools are schools of choice. The families, students, and faculty actively selected them. A variety of studies show the importance of allowing families to select among schools. One large national study on this issue compared the achievement of 24,000 eighth and tenth grade students in urban high schools. The study compared the achievement of students in large comprehensive high schools, Catholic schools, private schools, and public magnet schools. The author concluded that students in the urban magnet schools learned more and outperformed those in the other schools. Among the reasons for improved performance of magnet students were parental choice, students feeling a sense of membership and belonging, and a focused curriculum (Gamoran).

A 2004 report found that (high school) career academies “substantially improved the labor market prospects of young men, a group that has experienced a severe decline in real earnings in recent years. Through a combination of increased wages, hours worked, and employment stability, the young men in the Academy group earned over \$10,000 (18 percent) more than those in the non-Academy control group over the four-year follow-up period.” The most positive impact was on young men who were “at high or medium risk of dropping out when they entered the programs” (Kemple and Scott-Clayton).

Another study compared attitudes of students in comprehensive schools and students in smaller schools they had actively chosen. The study

concluded that students were more likely to value—and feel satisfied by—a program that they chose, instead of one to which they were assigned (Smith, Gregory and Pugh). Virtually all of the schools described in this report are open to all kinds of students. With only three exceptions, these schools have no admissions tests. Boston Arts Academy requires an audition and Clark Montessori Junior-Senior High gives preference to students who previously attended Montessori schools. Frederick Douglas enrolls some students strictly by lottery and some based on previous achievement. The evidence shows that small public schools can be effective without having an admissions test.

Deborah Meier is a New York City and Boston teacher who created a successful small school of choice in East Harlem in the early 1970s. She won a MacArthur Foundation “genius award” for her work. Meier believes that “...only in a small school can deep, ongoing discussion take place in ways that produce change and involve the entire faculty” (Joravsky).

The evidence is in. When comparing similar groups of students, those who attend small schools of choice are safer, have better attendance and behavior, demonstrate higher achievement, and are more likely to graduate. The challenge is to learn from communities such as those cited in this report.



14a

Benefits of Shared Facilities

Many communities are learning that it is valuable for schools to share space with organizations like museums, nursery schools, day care centers, senior citizen programs, and businesses. Co-locating with another organization can have enormous benefits for a school's students, their families, and the broader community.

One summary of research concluded, "15 of the 20 initiatives we looked at reported improvement in student academic achievement, as measured by improved grades in school courses and scores in proficiency testing. In addition, more than half of the evaluations looked for and found evidence of positive development as measured by a variety of indicators, including improved attendance, reduced behavior or discipline problems, greater compliance with school assignments and rules, increased access to physical and mental health services, greater contact with supportive adults, and improvements in personal/family situations" (Blank, et. al).

The benefits of schools and other organizations sharing people and facilities are innumerable. Withrow University High School in Cincinnati; Northfield, Minnesota's Community Service Center; and Mesa Arts Academy—where human service programs and a school are housed in the same building to serve students and families—are but a few of the successful school-community centers around the country.

Services provided through a school-community center can include academic support, health care, family support, counseling, substance abuse counseling, senior citizen services, and job training services (Blank, et. al 2004).

THE FIRST MAJOR BENEFIT OF CO-LOCATION is the expanded learning opportunities for students. Consider the advantages of sharing space with a higher education institution, museum, or zoo. Students at Arizona Agribusiness and Equine Center in Phoenix take courses at a community college because their high school shares space with the community college. Students at the Minnesota School of Environmental Science find it easy to participate in internships on environmental science, study animals, and help prepare exhibits because their school shares space with the Minnesota Zoo.

Students at a public school located in one of the nation's largest malls, the Mall of America in Bloomington, Minnesota, compare marketing and advertising strategies, look at how merchants try to attract people into their stores, and discuss advantages and disadvantages of being part of

The first major benefit of co-location is the expanded learning opportunities for students.

14a: Early childhood education center at New York's Julia Richman complex, where high school students get first-hand experience caring for young children.



a national chain.

A growing number of public schools share space with museums. A Flagstaff, Arizona, school shares space with a local museum. A Dearborn, Michigan, school shares space with the Henry Ford Museum. There are many other examples. Students at these museum schools are able to apply what they have learned on a daily basis while contributing to the museum where their schools are located (Borden).

At the Julia Richman Complex in New York City, several high schools share space with an elementary school and an early childhood program. This means high school students can not only read about young children's behavior, but also study it in the early childhood program. Cincinnati's Withrow University School

found that much more could be offered to students when faculty worked with a local agency named FamiliesFORWARD, which provides counseling for students and families, plus after-school programs to supplement what the faculty can do. As the case study explains, this collaboration helped move Withrow from a deeply troubled status to the highest ranking available from the Ohio Department of Education.

Public schools sharing space with businesses offer unique experiences. One report cites schools co-locating with the Miami-Dade airport, businesses in the downtown areas of Tampa and Des Moines, and large malls. One company creating malls has opened 12 schools in malls and has plans to open a total of 35 (Taylor and Snell). In these cases, the space

is provided by the businesses involved, with the curriculum and faculty provided by the school district.

Students gain from "unique educational opportunities afforded to them by the interaction with local businesses" (Taylor and Snell, Executive Summary). Schools also report higher levels of family involvement. And businesses report higher employee morale and lower turnover rates of employees—some of whom send their children to these schools.

A SECOND MAJOR BENEFIT OF CO-LOCATION is expansion of services for students and their families, particularly social services. Researcher Joy Dryfoos provides a compelling argument in favor of providing social services for children within their schools: "The cumulative effects of poverty



16a

have created social environments that challenge educators, community leaders, and practitioners of health, mental health, and social services to invent new kinds of institutional responses" (Dryfoos 1994: xv).

At Hamilton Elementary School in San Diego, the site of a school-community initiative called New Beginnings, teachers are trained to identify problems that their students may be having and are familiar with the roles and services that the social service agencies within the school-community center provide. This allows the teachers to easily refer their students to an agency and then track their students' progress (Institute for Educational Leadership).

One of the main goals of school-community centers such as Withrow, Mesa Arts Academy and Hamilton

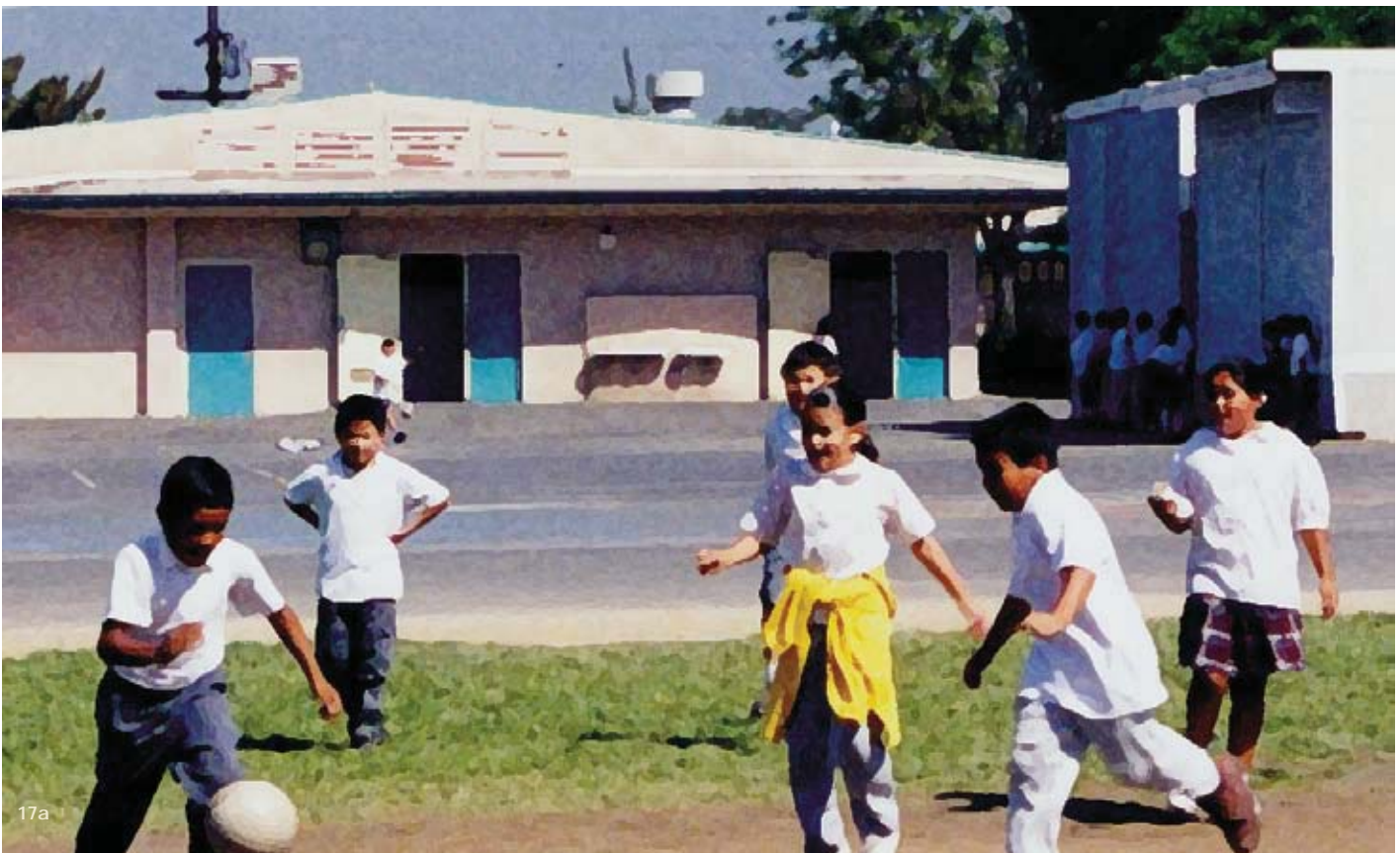
Elementary, is the improvement of educational achievement in part, by reducing social barriers to learning. This is done through better access to social services, which results in better family functioning and healthy youth development (Dryfoos). Schools sometimes find it difficult to meet the range of students' needs. By having immediate access to counseling, training, and health care professionals located in the same building, educators may be able to do a better job of helping young people reach their potential.

Provision of health care can be an important element of these collaborative arrangements. It is controversial, and some communities won't support it. But in analyzing the effects of health clinics in schools, Dryfoos found that:

- school clinics are utilized the most by the highest risk students,
- many of the students who utilize the clinic have no other source of medical care and no health insurance,
- absences and excuses to go home have decreased because minor illness can be treated at school, and
- users of school clinics have lower use of drugs, better school attendance, and lower dropout rates (Dryfoos: 2000, pp 134–35).

Here are a few examples of improvements occurring in the health and wellbeing of students, as well as in their academic achievement and behavior, when social services and schools work and live together.

- Charles Drew Elementary School in Philadelphia showed more improvement than any other school on the state's standardized reading and



math tests.

- At Broad Acres Elementary School in Maryland, the number of families with no health care access declined from 53 percent to 10 percent and the number of families with no health insurance coverage went from 38 percent to 10 percent.
- At Lane Middle School in Portland, Oregon, suspensions declined from 50 to 15 over a two-year period. (Dryfoos).

In many cases it is not only the student who needs support, but also his or her family. When a school shares facilities with social service agencies, children and families have access to programs that will serve their needs and help students succeed in school.

Families often do not know how or where to access services that could help them. When different social service agencies are together in the same building and are able to coordinate their eligibility procedures, families are better able to find the help that they need, are able to do so quickly and efficiently, and know where to go in the case of an emergency. Assistance from social service agencies is most effective when the entire family is helped, rather than just individual members. If families are successful and their needs are met, then their children will perform better in school (Institute for Educational Leadership).

Social services are not the only kind of services that can be made available to students through a shared facility. Some schools share space with a city or county library, dramatically expanding the range of books, computers, and other materials available for student use. Boston

Arts Academy and Fenway High School share space with a music library, thus expanding the collection and allowing the library to stay open longer hours at no additional cost to the schools.

A THIRD MAJOR BENEFIT OF CO-LOCATION is that it allows a community to offer programs, facilities, and services that it might otherwise not be able to afford. The northwestern Minnesota community of Perham created a marvelous community recreation building, open from early in the morning until late at night. Neither the city, the school district, nor local businesses could afford to construct, maintain, or operate the center by themselves.

But by working together, they can. The story is the same in Northfield, Minnesota. The Northfield Community Resource Center is the product of collaboration among five organizations, including the city, local school district, senior citizens program, and two anti-poverty agencies. Together they were able to create and operate a marvelous, state of the art center that none of the groups could afford by itself.

High schools in Twinsburg and Medina, Ohio, are using the same principles. Twinsburg is a suburban town near Cleveland. A community fitness center, next to the high school, is managed by the City of Twinsburg. It includes a swimming pool, diving well, a field house with a six-lane track and three athletic courts, locker rooms, offices, and childcare and reception areas. The facility is used both by high school students and the broader community (Fanning/Howey, a).

The Medina School District and several community organizations are doing something both similar and unique. The local hospital will lease a part of the community center and supply staff, equipment, and other resources. A new auditorium with an orchestra pit and seating for 1,200 is being constructed. A local performing arts foundation has pledged \$200,000 to help fund construction, and will operate the auditorium (Fanning/Howey b). Co-location of this type means that tax funds are being stretched and spent in a much more efficient manner. This is good news for taxpayers, as well as those responsible for administering tax funds.

A FOURTH MAJOR BENEFIT OF SHARED FACILITIES is that it creates more time for families to spend together. A number of "work site" public schools, such as those in Miami, Des Moines and St. Paul, are open to workers in the immediate area. So, for example, many families whose children attend the Downtown Kindergarten located in a St. Paul bank, or the school at the Miami-Dade airport, drive to and from work with their children, have daily contact with their child's teachers, and sometimes eat lunch with them. Many busy families appreciate more time with their children.

Educators and community leaders in other countries are seeing the benefits of small schools and shared facilities. In the Netherlands, for example, two elementary schools recently have been constructed with these ideas in mind. In Vleuten, an elementary school has been built directly under a new apartment building



19a



19b

Shared Facilities permit tax funds to be spent efficiently. Another major benefit of co-location is that it allows a community to offer programs, facilities, and services that it might otherwise not be able to afford. 16a: Architectural rendering for a Medina, Ohio performing arts center being constructed by several organizations as a cooperative. 17a: Co-location with a medical clinic helps students at Vaughn Next Century School in California be healthier, and learn more. 19a and 19b: Twinsburg, Ohio, fitness center.



Making schools "true centers of the community" seems to make a lot of sense. If avoids costly duplication of facilities and structures, it allows underused schools to be used many more hours per day and year." (North Carolina Department of Education)

serving families and senior citizens. Part of the idea is that it will be easy for senior citizens to volunteer in the elementary school located directly under their apartment. A number of senior citizens are doing just that.

Another Dutch elementary school has just been built in Deventer, on the second story of a store in a commercial area. Part of the idea here is that it is easier for students to study real world examples in, for example, mathematics. Students study percentages and decimals and then visit

some nearby shops where they can see how math is being used in business. The school includes an outside play area and gymnasium.

Aurora Charter School in Edmonton, Alberta, illustrates another example of the co-location idea. This school is housed in a multi-story building owned by a local hospital. Some of the hospital's programs are located in the building. Sharing space allows students to easily learn more about careers in medicine, as well as to discuss health and science issues

with hospital professionals.

A "National Summit on School Design," convened in October 2005, brought together more than 200 teachers, parents, administrators, architects, community leaders, mayors and other officials. They produced eight major recommendations for "School Design Excellence. Three of them were "Create Schools as Centers of Community," "Consider non-traditional options for School Facilities and Classrooms," and "Foster a small school culture." (American Architectural Foundation/ KnowledgeWorks Foundation) Each of these approaches is documented in pages that follow.

Since 1989, the Children's Aid Society has worked with New York City schools to create a few school-community centers. The results have been very encouraging—increased student achievement, better attendance, and a much closer, more positive working relationship between the schools and families they serve. This experience led Phillip Coltoff, Executive Director of the Children's Aid Society to write, "It is absolutely possible to radically transform our



21a



21b

20a and 20b: A school in Deventer, Netherlands, is built on the second story of shops in a commercial area. 21a and 21b: A school in the Dutch city of Vleuten is built underneath an apartment complex, helping promote contacts among students, parents, and senior citizens who live above the school.

schools into powerful institutions that offer children, their families, and entire communities true hope for a better future” (Coltoff, p. 7).

A thoughtful report from the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction summarizes experience with shared facilities: Making schools “true centers of the community seems to make a lot of sense. It avoids costly duplication of facilities and structures, it allows under used schools to be used many more hours per day and year” (North Carolina, p. 24).

The report concludes, “True community schools (which also provide other community services), can save local taxpayers significant sums of money, reduce depletion of limited natural resources, and limit sprawl.” The report does not say sharing facilities is easy: “When conflicts arise (and they will) each agency must be willing to work together ... to solve conflicts or problems ...” (North Carolina, p. 24). However, as that report, and the following case studies show, conflicts can be overcome. Families and students will benefit.

The next section offers brief case studies of schools carrying out these principles of small school size and/or shared-co-located facilities. The case studies include both district run public schools and charter public schools. We know enough to do much better. We hope the following examples will encourage and assist people who want to make a difference for students and their families.



22a and 22b: Like many excellent small schools, Codman reaches out, developing relationships with other organizations to help its students learn about, for example, nature and drama.

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School Case Studies



Academy of the Pacific Rim Charter School

Boston, Massachusetts

Imagine an inner city public school, open to all, which uses the best ideas of the Asian and Western education systems. Every class starts and ends with students (grades 6 through 12) and teachers standing and thanking each other for their efforts.

KEY EDUCATIONAL FEATURES. Every day the Academy of the Pacific Rim middle school begins with a character-based advisory period or an all-school opening ceremony. The opening ceremony features student skits, announcements, and presentation of the “gambatte” award. The Japanese use this term, which translates as “persist, keep going,” to end conversations in much the same way Americans say “see you later” or “take care.” The award is presented to a student in recognition of his or her hard work.

Students attend school from 7:45 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., 190 days per year. (The typical school year in the Boston Public School system is 180 days.) Each teacher has two prep hours a day, a computer, and a telephone with a private extension. Each faculty member advises 10 to 12 students. The faculty also sends bi-monthly student progress reports home to parents. Students in grades 7 and higher study Mandarin.

Academy teachers also apply the



26a



26b



26c

best American ideas about active, “hands-on” learning. When eighth graders study the Constitution, each student researches a person at the Constitutional Convention and reenacts that person's role, while wearing a costume of the era. Sixth grade math students practice decimals and percentages as they create restaurant menus. The curriculum is diverse, incorporating the literature of many cultures. For example, eighth graders read Shakespeare's *Macbeth* and Maya Angelou's *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*. Ninth graders read plays such as *Othello* and books such as *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*

and Anne Frank's *Diary of a Young Girl*.

The academy serves 375 students and in 2007-08 will add a 5th grade to serve 450 students. Half of the students are from low-income families and more than 75 percent are “students of color”—primarily African American.

The faculty is rewarded financially when students make academic progress. Academy of the Pacific Rim uses the budget and personnel flexibility that comes from being a charter school to develop these incentives, along with its innovative program. But schools don't have to be

charters to learn from this powerful program.

KEY ARCHITECTURAL FEATURES. The school's building, constructed in 1903, originally was a carriage factory. Stairways feature quotations urging students to make the most of their skills, talents, and energy. The building houses several other businesses.

IMPACT ON STUDENTS. Despite being open to a cross section of students, academy students score among the highest on required statewide tests of any Boston public school. In fact, the students score higher on these tests than any school except a couple of Boston public schools at which students must score very well on an entrance exam to be admitted. APR has graduated 82 alumni, over 90% of whom are currently enrolled in public and private 4-yr colleges and universities. The school also has an excellent record of retaining students, with a far lower mobility rate than most Boston public schools.

FOR MORE INFORMATION. Contact Spencer Blasdale, Director, Academy of the Pacific Rim, 617-361-0050, One Westinghouse Plaza, Hyde Park, Mass. 02136; see www.pacrim.org.

26a: Academy of the Pacific Rim shares space with several businesses in a former carriage factory that is over 100 years old. 26b: Students study martial arts to become more physically fit and develop stronger self-discipline. 26c: Each teacher has a desk with computer and phone, reflecting the school's emphasis on treating faculty as respected professionals.

Amistad Academy

New Haven, Connecticut

Founded in 1999 in New Haven, CT, Amistad Academy Middle School has been so successful that New York City officials offered facilities and startup funds to help start similar schools in Brooklyn, NY. Amistad has recently replicated its program in both New York and Connecticut, and has been featured in a PBS documentary about how some schools are closing the achievement gap between white and students of color. The school also has been cited in a New York Times Magazine article about schools that are closing the achievement gap.

Ninety-eight percent of Amistad's students are African American or Hispanic, and 100% are chosen by blind lottery. Students entering the fifth grade are, on average, more than two years behind grade level in reading and math. By the time these students reach 8th grade, they are outperforming the state average and many white, affluent suburban school districts. The school enrolls approximately 270 students in grades 5-8, and the percentage of students qualifying for free or reduced lunch has ranged over time between 71 and 89 percent. Amistad was named Connecticut's 2006 Title 1 Distinguished School after posting the greatest academic gains of any middle school in the state. The school has a substantial waiting list.

Amistad is named for a ship that was the site of a slave revolt in the 1800s, an incident that ended with



27a



27b



27c

the slaves jailed in New Haven but ultimately freed by the U.S. Supreme Court. Amistad has three "overarching goals":

1. ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE: To accelerate the learning of students so that they achieve academic breakthroughs in the skills that are necessary for success in high school, col-

lege and life – especially reading, writing, and math.

2. PUBLIC CITIZENSHIP: To develop students who take responsibility for themselves, their school, and their community by living up to the school's REACH values (Respect, Enthusiasm, Achievement, Citizenship, and Hard Work).

3. PARTNERS IN PUBLIC SCHOOL

REFORM: To develop and share an instructional model that consistently produces dramatic growth in student achievement and to work with others to further excellence in public education.

AMISTAD HAS SEVERAL KEY FEATURES:

- Longer day: school begins at 7:30 and ends at 5:00 pm
- Rigorous standards based curriculum
- Disciplined, achievement-oriented school culture
- Students wear uniforms
- Intense literacy program
- School culture of "sweating the small stuff"
- Focus on results without excuses or shortcuts

IMPACT ON STUDENTS: On the Connecticut Mastery Test (CMT), Amistad's 8th grade students consistently outperform not only the New Haven district average, but also achieve on par with or in excess of the state average. In 2007, for example, the percentage of Amistad 8th graders at mastery in reading was 66% (the district average was 34%; the CT state average was 67%). In writing, 78% of Amistad's 8th graders achieved mastery, compared to 30% district wide and 64% of students

statewide. In math, 73% of Amistad's 8th graders achieved mastery, compared to 27% district wide and 64% statewide.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, please see www.achievementfirst.org, or contact Amistad Academy at 407 James Street, New Haven, CT, 06513; Tel. 203 773-3223

Achievement First, a non-profit started by the leaders of Amistad, has been asked to help create several other charters based on the Amistad model in Connecticut and New York. These replication sites are all within the first four years of operation. The first replication of the school, also in New Haven, is showing similarly excellent results. Achievement First now runs five academies in New Haven, one in Bridgeport, CT, and six in Brooklyn, NY.





Arizona Agribusiness and Equine Center

Phoenix, Arizona

The Phoenix based Arizona Agribusiness and Equine Science Center, located adjacent to and on the campus of South Mountain Community College, continues to win awards for its effectiveness and innovation.

The school was recognized by the Arizona Department of Education as a "highly performing" school for 2006-2007 (the latest year for which ratings are available). The school and its host college won an "Innovator of the Year" award from the state's League for Innovation in the Community College. The award came from the Bioscience Collaborative they created. Students learn science concepts as they conduct original research in association with four residential Ph.D.'s, USDA, and U.C. San Diego's Supercomputer Human Genome Project. Students may present their scientific findings at national symposia and apply for bio-industry and federal government internships. In a recent publication by the Flinn Scientific Foundation Building the Bioscience Pipeline, AAEC was listed as one of the few recognized bioscience programs in Arizona schools.

"It's important, and it's real." That's how one teacher describes experiments high school students are doing at the Arizona Agribusiness and Equine Center in Phoenix. This public charter high school shares space with South Mountain Community College.

Part of co-location is sharing faculty and facilities with the college. The idea is to encourage students to excel and to understand how they can improve the world. One student stated, "I was challenged with college level expectations and got my Associate Degree two weeks before my high school diploma!" For the first time, on May 24, 2007, AAEC had one of their over-achieving students graduate as Valedictorian of South Mountain Community College and then graduate as Valedictorian from AAEC High School.

KEY EDUCATIONAL FEATURES. Recently, some of the center's students tried to reduce or eliminate the number of insects attracted to the Madagascar Periwinkle plant. By injecting bacteria into the plant's roots, students found that after four weeks the plants would be 100 percent free of a common Arizona insect, the whitefly. These bacteria, which keep insects away, don't appear to have any detrimental effects. Untreated plants were infected with the flies after four weeks in the same growing environment.

Who cares? Periwinkle is a beautiful little plant that grows throughout Arizona. But in addition to beauty, the plant provides chemicals that help treat leukemia. Keeping insects away allows the plants to grow stronger. Such important lessons can come from working with little plants, growing quietly on a shelf. But student work is attracting a good deal of attention. Some of the school's students have earned an Associate of Arts degree from the community college shortly before they graduated from high school.

The Center's faculty includes certified public school teachers and community college instructors. The school specializes in applied sciences, mathematics, and agricultural fields. Students take classes at the college, participate in internships, and often go on field trips to extend their knowledge and learning. The Center enrolls about 120 students in grades 9 through 12. Its student body is more racially diverse than the local school district. The school has opened a second program, which also is located on the campus of a community college.

KEY ARCHITECTURAL FEATURES. One of the school's buildings is located at the edge of the college. However, all students use the college's facilities, including classrooms, labs, libraries, computers, and fitness center.

The college library also serves the

neighboring community. AAEC has opened two other schools, also located adjacent to Maricopa Community College campuses in East Mesa (Red Mountain) and in the North Valley (Paradise Valley). The community college uses the school's classrooms in the evening and on Saturdays.

IMPACT ON STUDENTS. The Arizona Department of Education rates AAEC South Mountain campus as "Highly Performing." According to the principal, students earn an average of 46 college credits per graduate before graduating. A few earn an A.A. degree as they graduate from high school.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION. Contact: William R. Torres Conley, Principal, Arizona Agribusiness and Equine Center, South Mountain Community College, Phoenix, Arizona 85042 (602) 323-9890

30a: The Arizona Agribusiness and Equine center shares space with South Mountain Community College. This gives the school's students access to college facilities, including a fitness center and lounge areas. The students also can take courses from college faculty. 30b: Murals and other art on the AAEC and South Mountain Community College campus reflect themes of the Southwest.



Boston Arts Academy and Fenway High School

Boston, Massachusetts

Take an old industrial building directly across the street from Fenway Park, Boston's historic baseball field. Give teachers the opportunity to create new public high schools. The result is a building with two popular, distinctive public high schools—the Boston Arts Academy and Fenway High School.

Boston Arts Academy

KEY EDUCATIONAL FEATURES. Boston Arts Academy is a Boston pilot school serving about 400 students in grades 9 through 12. Students are admitted through an artistic process that is academic blind. The school, founded in 1998, is a unique collaboration between the Boston Public Schools and six internationally known institutions specializing in visual arts, performing arts, and architecture. In addition to taking a college prep, interdisciplinary curriculum, students major in one of five arts discipline, adding a minimum of ten hours to their schooling weekly.

All students participate in the Senior Project Grant, a capstone experience completed in a student's senior year. Each student creates a community-based arts program and writes a grant proposal to launch the project. This experience is an opportunity for students to apply their skills and passion towards a particular cause and gain experience as independent artists. A school-based grant



review committee, comprised of community members, reviews these proposals. Fifteen percent of all proposals were funded in 2006.

Fenway High School

KEY EDUCATIONAL FEATURES.

Founded in 1983, Fenway is now in its 24th year. It is one of the pioneers of the small schools movement. Named one of the first “New American High Schools” by the U.S. Department of Education, it has been designated as an “exemplar” by the Coalition of Essential Schools. Fenway High School enrolls 300 students (55 percent African American, 20 percent Hispanic, 20 percent Caucasian and 5 percent Asian) in grades 9 through 12.

Fenway uses an advisory system, so each student is known well by at least one faculty member. Each faculty member has about 20 advisees, with whom they meet several times a week. Many of the students have the same advisor for 3 to 4 years. Students are grouped into learning families called houses.

Fenway requires students to demonstrate business skill and knowledge prior to graduation. About 90 community members come into the school twice a year to help judge student projects and tell the students how well they are doing compared to “real world” expectations. An internship with a community agency or business is required for graduation. Fenway collaborates with community agencies, business, colleges, foundations, and organizations such as the Boston Museum of Science, a chain of pharmacies, and Harvard Medical School to extend learning beyond

the school classroom.

KEY ARCHITECTURAL FEATURES. The schools are located in an old, former industrial building near many major Boston arts organizations. The building’s library is shared with both schools and with the Boston Symphony Teacher Resource Center, thus allowing it to be open longer hours, including every Saturday. The library is open to 6 p.m. three evenings a week and every Saturday morning.

IMPACT ON STUDENTS. Both schools are strong advocates for assessing students’ performance in various ways, including classroom-based diagnostics, portfolios, exhibitions, standardized tests, work internships, integrated projects, and college acceptance. Surveys of employers show that Fenway students are very good on the job and great team players. Eighty-five percent of Fenway’s students enrolling at ninth grade fail state and nationally normed standardized test. Four years later, 80 to 85 percent from Fenway enter college. In 2006, 96% of Boston Arts Academy’s graduates went on to 2-or 4-year colleges and received over \$1,400,000 in grants and scholarship assistance.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION. Contact , Head of School, Fenway High School, 174 Ipswich Street, Boston Mass. 02215; (617) 635-9911, or fenwayhs.org ; www.fenway.boston.k12.ma.us.

Contact Head of School, Boston Arts Academy, 174 Ipswich Street, Boston, Mass. 02215; (617) 635-6470; [http:// www.bostonartsacademy.org](http://www.bostonartsacademy.org)



31a and 31b: The two schools are housed in a building across the street from Boston’s Fenway Field. Student artwork is featured throughout the building. 32a: Sharing space with the Boston Symphony Teacher Resource Center brings students together with community residents.

Buffalo King Center

Buffalo, New York

A church closes in a run down, low-income area of the city. It's a beautiful place with a 100-foot-high ceiling and stained glass windows. The church was completed more than 100 years ago and has served generations of parishioners, but they have died or moved to the suburbs. No congregation wants it. What to do? In Buffalo, New York, the answer is to create a charter school for elementary students. The award-winning King Center is the product of creativity and commitment.

KEY EDUCATIONAL FEATURES. One hundred five students in grades K through 4 currently attend the school. The school environment is characterized as a respectful and responsible community of learners where highly qualified teachers work with small groups and where no class size exceeds 21 students. The school plans to expand to 360 students through eighth grade. Partners in the school include the Teacher Preparation Programs at Houghton College and Buffalo State College and the School of Nursing at the State University of New York at Buffalo.

Special attention has been given to the need to improve school readiness skills of students entering kindergarten at the King Center Charter School. Since charter school funding

in New York State is available only for students at the kindergarten level or higher, King Center Charter has implemented an early admissions program that makes it possible to admit 3 and 4 year olds and, through the community center, offer the Parent-Child Home Program as a school readiness option for students who are admitted early. Data gathered over the past two years show that students who participate in the PCHP program score higher on school readiness skills evaluations upon entry into kindergarten and continue to score higher on standardized test through 2nd grade (this is as far as the current test data goes). Interested individuals and foundations have provided PCHP funding.



33a



KEY ARCHITECTURAL FEATURES. The school operates in the sanctuary of the former church, which opened in the 1880s. The pews have been removed to create classrooms. Students can look up and see the high ceiling and stained glass windows. An internationally recognized jury selected the King Center for the “honor award” in the Committee on Architecture of Education 1999 Design Awards and Exemplary Learning Environment competition. The Yale University Bush Center in Child Development and Social Policy designated the King Center New York’s first “School of the 21st Century” in recognition of the extensive collaborative efforts of the program and its efforts to help children in all areas of development. The building was also awarded a Silver Citation in the American School & University Educational Interiors Showcase.

Four classrooms are equipped with wall-mounted video cameras with infrared tracking devices and are connected to a fiber-optic telecommunications network that links the King Center with area colleges. College faculty are able to schedule times for their classes to observe a “live” lesson taught at the King Center and interact with the classroom teacher from the comforts of their college classroom. This connection to higher education institutions and the willingness of King Center teachers to put their work “on display,” are contributing to efforts to improve the quality of teacher education programs designed to prepare urban teachers.

Development of the King Center extends beyond the church building



that houses the school. Over the past few years the King Center has purchased 3 vacant buildings and 10 vacant lots in close proximity to the school. A building adjacent to the church that was a crack house and house of prostitution has been renovated for King Center program use and houses the PCHP program, a counseling program and a computer lab to serve the community. Another dilapidated house has been razed and a former tavern is currently being evaluated to determine if it should be renovated or razed. A community playground has been constructed on two of the lots, community gardens have been developed, and four lots have been landscaped to provide a grassy play area for children.

IMPACT ON STUDENTS. Scores on the New York State 4th grade tests in math, science, and English language arts were dismal for the first two years but have shown significant improvement ever since. Academic Outcomes specified in the school's Accountability Plan call for a minimum of 75 percent of students scoring at a proficient level or higher. On the most recent tests 93 percent scored at the proficient level or higher in math, 86 percent in science and 60 percent in English language arts.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION. Contact Dr. Claity Massey, Director, King Urban Life Center, 938 Genesee Street, Buffalo, N.Y. 14211; (716) 891-7912. www.kingurbanlifecenter.org.

33a: The stained glass windows and high ceilings add an unusual beauty to the King Center's Interior. 34a and 34b: The King's Center's bright classrooms sparkle in the more than 100-year old building which formerly was a church.

Cesar Chavez Academy Charter School

Pueblo, Colorado

Bored while teaching at Harvard, Dr. Lawrence Hernandez returned to his home in Pueblo, CO to start and run an award winning school. His work with low-income minority students has won national acclaim.

In 2000, Dr. Hernandez and his wife co-founded the Cesar Chavez Charter Public School, which he has directed since the school opened. For the last three years, Cesar Chavez has earned an "excellent rating," from the Colorado Department of Education, the highest of five available rankings. The school also was featured in a 2007 U.S. Department of Education publication highlighting schools that are closing or have eliminated achievement gaps between students of different races.

KEY EDUCATIONAL FEATURES. Cesar Chavez is a grades K-8 school that emphasizes a longer day and year, individualized instruction and places great value in music, painting and other arts. The typical day runs from 7:30 – 4:30 . Cesar Chavez uses the Core Knowledge Curriculum developed by E.D. Hirsch. It also makes extensive use of individual tutoring and computer based assistance to help students start at precisely their own level, and move forward. The school notes, "In the spirit of Cesar Chavez, the school will focus on exceptional Scholarship, Leadership and



36a



36b



36c

Community Involvement. While preparing children to meet and exceed Colorado's high academic content standards, the school will also place a unique emphasis on the history, culture, and native language of Latinos. This focus will be integrated throughout the educational experience of children Pre K-8th."

As a requirement for middle school graduation, students develop a portfolio, undertake a "thesis" project and



*To Lawrence Hernandez
With best wishes,*

36d

demonstrate scholarly capacities through a series of presentations.

Unlike some charter public schools, Cesar Chavez offers an extensive sports program. This includes soccer, volleyball, basketball and wrestling.

Several foundations have given the school money to help replicate it.

IMPACT ON STUDENTS. With more than 60% of the school's students coming from low-income families, and more than 70% of the students Hispanic, Cesar Chavez consistently has 20-30% more students scoring proficient or advanced than other students in the Pueblo district or the state average. For example, in 2005-2006: 90% of the 3-5th graders at Cesar Chavez scored in the top ranks in reading, compared with 74% in the district and 69% in the state. 91% of 3-5th graders scored in the top rank in writing, compared to 56% in the district and 54%

in the state.

93% of the 3-5th graders scored proficient or advanced in math, compared with 74% in the district, and 68% in the state. The same was true of 6th-8th graders.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, contact Dr. Lawrence Hernandez, Cesar Chavez Academy Charter School, 2500 West 18th Street, Pueblo, CO 81003. Phone: (719)295-1623, www.cesarchavezacademy.org

36a, 36b, 36c: Cesar Chavez honors student progress and achievement. 36d: President George Bush and Dr. Lawrence Hernandez

City Academy

St. Paul, Minnesota

Located in what was, and remains, a community recreation center, City Academy has achieved national recognition. City Academy is a classic example of the value of a school sharing space with another organization—in this case a

recreation center with excellent facilities. City Academy has achieved an enviable record of serving students with challenging backgrounds. It also is the nation's first charter public school. Both U.S. Secretary of Education Richard Riley and President Bill Clinton came to City Academy to praise its program, students, and educators.

KEY EDUCATIONAL FEATURES. The program is based on competencies—

all students must demonstrate certain skills and knowledge in order to graduate. It is heavily individualized and allows students to move at their own pace. It also offers rewards and connections. Students who work hard have the opportunity to obtain internships and apprenticeships with various construction trades. Thus, students learn important career skills as they improve their basic academic skills in math and reading.



37a

KEY ARCHITECTURAL FEATURES. For many years, the city of St. Paul has constructed and operated recreation centers in various neighborhoods around the city. Typically these facilities include a field house with a basketball court, craft studios or classrooms, and a large field with space for football in the fall and hockey in the winter. Young people generally use these recreation centers after school, in the evenings, on weekends,

and during vacations.

The WPA constructed a recreation center and located it in a low-income area on the city's East Side in 1940. In 1992, the city permitted several educators to create a new public school for about 100 secondary school students in the center. The center's three-story facility and outside athletic field had not previously been used during school time. The founders proposed to use the facili-

ties from Monday through Friday, during the morning and early afternoon (i.e., school time) and agreed to pay a modest amount of rent. The city agreed, figuring this was a win-win situation.

IMPACT ON STUDENTS. City Academy students are all either former drop outs or students who had been told to leave large traditional schools. In other words, these young people are not just "at risk," they have experienced significant problems in their lives. Never the less, the school has produced dramatic improvements in the students' skills, knowledge, attitude, and behaviors. For example, for every year the average student attends City Academy, her or his scores on standardized tests improve two years.

More than 90 percent of City Academy's graduates have continued their education beyond high school. Some graduates return to talk with current students, and one City Academy graduate joined the school's faculty.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION. Contact Director, City Academy, 958 Jessie St. Paul, Minn. 55101; (651) 298-4624.

www.cityacademy.org.



37a, 38a, and 38b: City Academy, the nation's first charter school, shares facilities with a recreation center. Serving students with challenging backgrounds, City Academy has a highly individualized curriculum that rewards students who make progress in their apprenticeships.

Clark Montessori

Cincinnati, Ohio

Maria Montessori's philosophy has inspired many parents and early childhood educators.

However, the Cincinnati Public Schools has created one of the nation's first Montessori public middle schools, and the nation's first public Montessori high school, which are housed together.

About 300 students attend the junior high school, and about 250 attend the high school. Educators say Montessori philosophy is central to the schools' vision, philosophy, and operation. Faculty want students to be productive, healthy, happy, contributing people. Approximately 50 percent of the students are African American, and 50% white. The complete range of academic skills is represented. Any student may attend the schools. However, priority is given to students who've attended a Montessori school. Key elements of the schools include.

EXTENSIVE USE OF THE OUTDOORS.

Twice a year the high school has two weeklong intersession (2 weeks) that involve intensive study of one subject. In the fall, students are involved in these immersion courses by grade level in order to work with their advisors and build community with each other. Freshmen work on study skills, community building, service projects for the school and strengths assessments. Sophomores do an "urban plunge" community service, juniors take a college prep intersession in

which they study for college entrance tests, write college essays, visit a variety of colleges and talk with admissions counselors. Seniors do career internships in two fields that they choose to help investigate post secondary study options. In the spring, intersessions are elective courses. In the past, students have, visited civil rights movement historical sites, lived with Hopi Indians in the southwest, studied flora and fauna of Costa Rica, hiked the Atlas Mountains and camped with a group of Berbers, and gone to Appalachia to study the culture, work on a Habitat project, and hiked sections of the Appalachian Trail.

EXTENSIVE USE OF COMMUNITY EXPERTS.

For example, a psychologist helped students study challenges teenagers face, and present this research at a national conference.

To help students learn to live in, learn from and contribute to their community, junior high students must contribute 36 hours of community service per year and high school stu-

dents must contribute 50 hours/year.

ACTIVE, HANDS ON LEARNING. The junior high school has a steel drum band has received a great deal of recognition, including being asked to play at the New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival, and many events in the Cincinnati metropolitan area. The band has produced a "cd" which it sells to raise money.

SENIORS HAVE A MAJOR YEAR LONG PROJECT

of their choice, which they present in May. Extensive opportunity for students to assess their work. Students tell teachers what grade they would give themselves. While faculty make the final decision, they help students learn to look carefully, honestly and critically at their own work.

ARCHITECTURAL FEATURES: Clark presently is in a temporary location while a new facility is being built.

MEASURES OF EFFECTIVENESS: The



39a



40a

Ohio Department of Education gave Clark Montessori an “effective” designation for the 2006-2007 school year...the second highest of five available rankings. Student scores on standardized tests are well above the average in Cincinnati, and national averages. The school also sees the way students learn to work together as a key indicator of success.

For example, the final experience for 8th graders is a 10 day trip with 50 other students. Students study marine biology, plan budgets, keep journals and do sketches. Faculty regard the success of this trip as a sign of success.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, see <http://clark.cps-k12.org> or contact: Principal, Clark Montessori, 5425 Winton Ridge Lane, Cincinnati, Ohio 45232, 513-363-7100

39a and 40a: Clark Montessori shows that well designed, hands-on projects help improve student achievement and develop a sense of pride among youngsters. The school’s steel drum band is very popular and has produced a CD that it sells to raise money for field trips and other projects.

Codman Academy Charter Public School

**Dorchester,
Massachusetts**

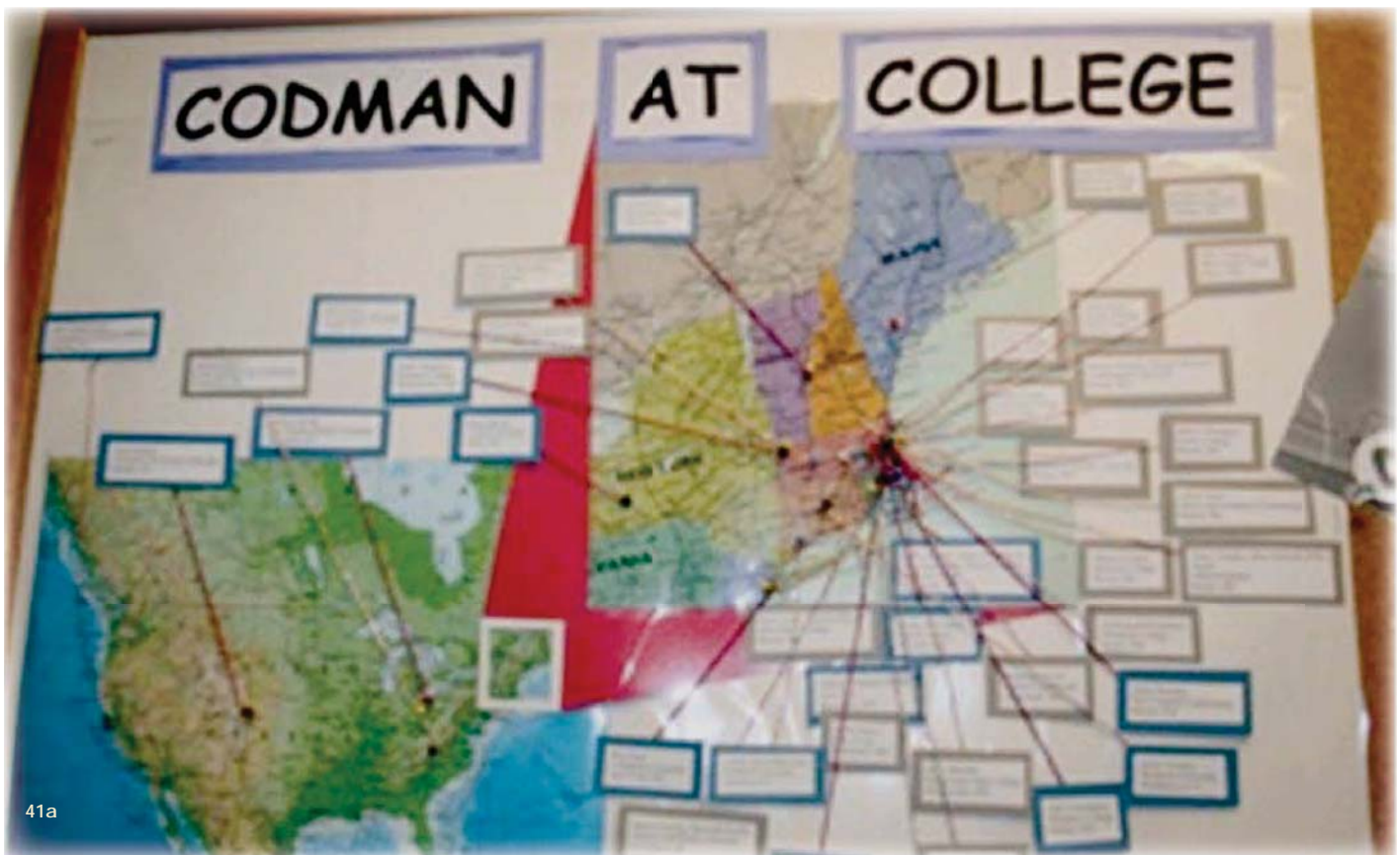
Called a “blueprint for urban education” by The New York Times, Codman Academy Charter Public School’s success as a new model for high schools has also been the subject of prominent stories in The Boston Globe and on National Public Radio’s “All Things Considered.” Codman takes a holistic approach to serving students, their families and alumni. Located in a low income neighborhood where violence is an ongoing challenge, admission is by lottery. 100% of the graduating

classes have been accepted to four year colleges. 99% are students of color, and 65% are eligible for the free/reduced lunch program. 22% of the student body has Special Needs as defined by their Individual Education Plans. Thirty percent speak one of four languages other than English at home.

A Boston Globe editorial called the test scores, school’s graduation rate, and college placement record “outstanding.”

KEY FEATURES OF THE SCHOOL ARE:

- Use of Expeditionary Learning design from Outward Bound which emphasizes leadership, service and character as well as intellectual and physical development.
- Strong social justice focus across curriculum including senior social action project with research paper and demonstration that the student has made positive change in the community.
- Deep community partnerships including Codman Square Health Center, the Huntington Theatre Company and Boston Modern Orchestra Project which enrich curriculum and extend classroom to the entire city.
- Four-year performance sequence required of every student including participation events such as national Poetry Outloud and Shakespeare competitions, writing and producing three original theatre pieces and giving a Senior Talk





42a



42b

- Required four years of math and laboratory science, with projects that are community based including focus on diabetes, obesity prevention and energy conservation.
- Single sex, multi age advisory system ("crews"), which meet at least three times week and also have rotating chores such as

serving and cleaning up lunch.

- Single gender "Talking Circles" for all ninth graders led by social workers.
- After admission to the school, individual meeting with parent/guardian to discuss parent and child's dream for the child and how Codman can help support family in achieving that dream.

- Wireless environment with each junior and senior assigned his or her own laptop.
- Longer day academic classes are 9 am – 4:15 with required sports, dance and other physical education offered in the morning and afternoons at 7:15am & 6pm, and an optional supervised study hall open until 7 pm (which 40% of students use on a daily basis).
- Longer school year – required classes on Saturday mornings and two summers of required approved programs for all students such as Huntington Theatre/ Codman summer Shakespeare production.
- College advising beginning in grade 9 with multiple college visits and completing sample college applications.
- Culture of hospitality to visitors including shaking hands and looking guest in the eye. The school has hosted delegations from Japan, Ireland, Germany, England, South Africa, Israel and Northern Ireland.
- Strong ongoing support for alumni while in college and participation by alumni in school events, including leading in new graduates at commencement.

Dissemination including documentation on line at www.codmanacademy.org, and mentorship to candidates who are interested in starting schools similar to Codman. "Film Speak True: Shakespeare Competition at Codman Academy" narrated by Taye Diggs is available for viewing on line at You Tube.

Codman's mission "is to prepare

students for full participation in the intellectual, economic and civic life of our society, by ensuring their full preparation and access to further education, the skills and vision to undertake a rewarding career, and the motivation and character needed to engage deeply and productively in community life. We view parents and community members as integral partners in this endeavor.”

IMPACT ON STUDENTS: Boston Globe editorial called the school’s graduation rate and statewide test scores “outstanding.” 100% of the 2005, 2006 and 2007 students were accepted at 4-year colleges and universities. Alumni current enrollment includes Bates, Brandeis, Boston College, Bowdoin, Holy Cross, Kentucky State, Mount Holyoke, Marrieta, Regis, North Carolina A&T, Northeastern, Trinity, Wentworth, UMass-Amherst, and Utica. Documentary film, “Voices of Codman Alumni” featuring interviews on college campuses produced by students at Harvard Graduate School of Education is available from the school.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, Contact Codman Academy Charter Public School, 637 Washington Street, Dorchester, MA 02124.
www.codmanacademy.org

41a: 100% of the graduating seniors have been accepted to four year colleges. 42a: Students meet with Massachusetts Governor Deval Patrick. 42b: Codman student at her internship.

Frederick Douglass Academy

Harlem, New York City

Frederick Douglass Academy is located on the northern end of Harlem in New York City.

Approximately 90 percent of the students graduate within four years of entering, compared to a city-wide average of about 50 percent. Open to all students, Frederick Douglass Academy and its founding principal have been featured on “60 Minutes,” former Congressman John Kasich’s television, Heroes, ESPN: Between the Lines, and Queer Eye for the Straight Guy.

KEY EDUCATIONAL FEATURES.

Frederick Douglass Academy enrolls 1,450 students in grades 6 through 12. Unlike some “exam high schools” in New York City, Douglass does not require students to score well on a test to enroll. The school is a monument to tough love—students wear uniforms and expectations are high. The school’s goal is to “provide a rich, vigorous, and challenging academic curriculum that will enable our students to enter the college of their choice.” The school is not just named for Frederick Douglass; it embodies his resolution. The school’s motto—“Without struggle, there is no progress”—which appears at its front entrance, comes from one of his speeches. Douglass’s picture is featured throughout the building.

Beginning with the sixth grade, the school is committed to preparing its students for college. The college



counseling office is open every day until 4:00 p.m. and from noon to 4:00 p.m. two Saturdays per month. The college counselor meets with seniors weekly to make sure they are following through with the college admissions process. The school’s attitude, as explained by the college counselor, is “We know our children can succeed. We work with them and their families to make sure it happens.”

The school also has tutoring until 6pm and is open 6 days a week. On Saturday, Science labs, math and science tutorials, SAT prep classes and sports are offered. Every year at least 98% of the graduating class goes to college and this far exceeds the city average. The key to Frederick Academy’s success is a team of dedicated teachers who

honestly believe that students can achieve greatness. Most of the teachers can be found in the school until at least 6 pm.

All middle school students receive one period a day instruction in chess, which has helped increase academic performance. FDA offers 9 Advance Placement courses and students take college courses at Hunter College. FDA students have traveled extensively to countries such as Japan, Italy, France, Mexico, England, Ghana, South Africa, Canada, and through out the United States.

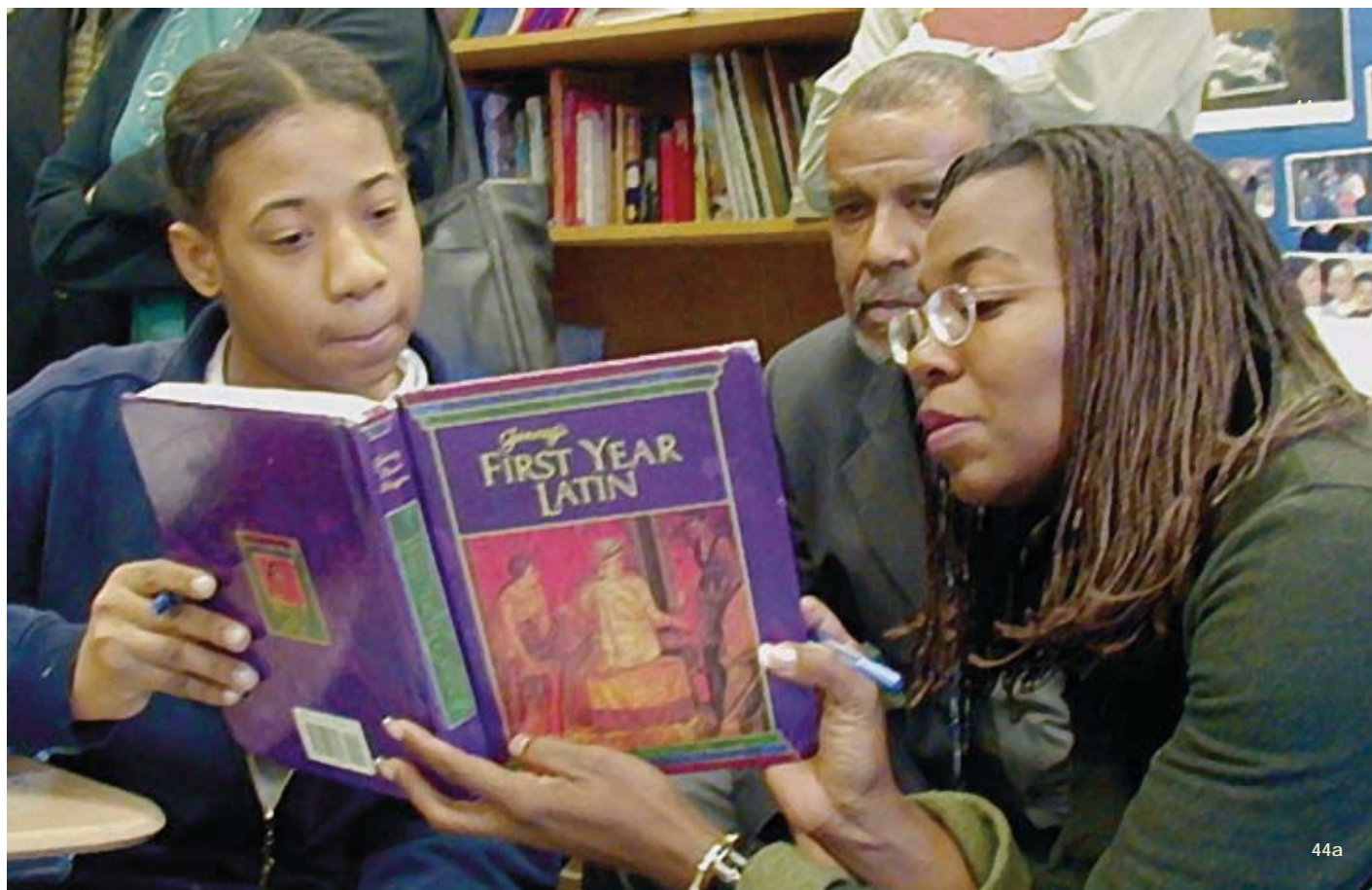
KEY ARCHITECTURAL FEATURES. The Douglass school building was once an elementary school. It would win

no awards for outside beauty. It is located on the northern end of Harlem, in a low-income area. But inside, the school shines. You don't see paper or other debris on the floor, anywhere.

IMPACT ON STUDENTS. The school's students have a much higher passing rate on state Regents Examinations than the average New York City public school. In addition, more and more students from Frederick Douglass continue on with their education after high school. In June 2006, Frederick Douglass had 120 graduates—all of them went to college, including Columbia, Dartmouth, Brown, and Ithaca College. The students received more

than \$5 million in scholarship offers. Douglass teachers acknowledge societal problems. But challenges are not excuses. They believe, and the school's record show, that hard work, creativity, encouragement, and expectations produce success.

Douglass also has been discussed in several other publications, such as, founding principal Lorraine Monroe's book, *Nothing's Impossible*. (New York: Public Affairs Books, 1997) and the Heritage Foundation publication "No Excuses: Lessons From 21 High Performing, High Poverty Schools," as well as major newspapers in Europe, Asian, and the United States.





FOR FURTHER INFORMATION. Contact Dr. Gregory Hodge, Principal, Frederick Douglass Academy, 2581 Adam C. Powell, Jr. Blvd., New York, N.Y. 10039; (212) 491-4107; ghodge@schools.nyc.gov; www.FDA1.org .

44a, 44b and 45a: The spirit of hard work, high expectations, and persistence pervades Frederick Douglass Academy. Douglass' picture, bust, and quotations are found throughout the school. Students are taught to excel in traditional subjects like Latin as well as to develop entrepreneurial skills through mini-businesses they create.

Julia Richman Education Center

New York, New York

People come from all over the world to see what educators have done to the rejuvenated Julia Richman school building in New York City. Opened in 1923, the building hosted a school for young women who were being trained in clerical work. Then it was turned into a large comprehensive school for more than 2,000 students. By the mid-1990s, attendance and graduation rates were so low the New York City Board of Education adopted a plan, proposed by the Coalition of Essential Schools, to close the large failing high school and create six small schools of choice. Today six autonomous schools share the Julia Richman Education Complex (JREC) space.

KEY EDUCATIONAL FEATURES. The schools include

- *Ella Baker Elementary School*, which provides a child-centered curriculum for children from pre-kindergarten age through to eighth grade
- *P226M Junior High*, which serves autistic junior high school students by emphasizing learning through arts and technology
- *Manhattan International High School* for students who have lived in the United States less than four years and are becoming bilingual
- *Talent Unlimited High School*, which focuses on the performing arts
- *Urban Academy*, a transfer school which emphasizes inquiry-based teaching and learning and uses a

college-like curriculum and schedule to prepare students for higher education; and

- Vanguard High School, which helps students become intellectually powerful, creative, and resourceful members of society

Three of the four high schools use a system of performance-based assessment to assess students. Research has shown such a system contributes significantly to students' academic success. Twenty-eight schools across New York state use this system of performance-based assessment to determine if students are college-ready.

KEY ARCHITECTURAL FEATURES. Each school has its own space in the building and shares some common facilities, such as the library and auditori-

um. In addition to the schools, several services share space in the complex. These include the Mt. Sinai Student Health Center, and the Center for Inquiry in Teaching and Learning, a professional development facility. The building also houses First Steps, an infant toddler program serving the children of teen parents who attend school in the building. The facility includes an observation room that is used for child development classes for students and daycare center workers from throughout New York City. The Julia Richman complex currently is challenging a college's proposal to take over the location and to use the area for its own purposes (See www.jrec.org for an update).

IMPACT ON STUDENTS. Graduation rates at the high schools are signifi-

cantly better than the citywide average. Students at several of the schools participate in service learning and internships. The U.S. Department of Education named Urban Academy a "New American High School," meaning the school is regarded as a national model. Tom Vander Ark, formerly of The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation has called the Julia Richman Education Center "the best example of a multiplex in the country" and it has been featured in Tom Toch's book, *HighSchools on a Human Scale*.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION. Contact Ann Cook, Julia Richman Complex, 317 E. 67th Street, New York, N.Y. 10021; (212) 570-5284. Or see www.jrec.org





46a, 47a and 47b: A large, formerly failing school has been replaced with six small, successful schools, a health clinic and a day care center. Each school has its own space within the building. Some areas, such as the library and auditorium, are common spaces used at various times by all the schools.

KIPP Academy

Bronx, New York

Established in 1995, the KIPP Academy Charter School in Bronx, New York enrolls approximately 250 students, grades 5-8. Eighty-five percent of the students are eligible for free and reduced lunch. Fifty-two percent of the students are Hispanic/Latin, and 46% are African American.

KIPP Academy in the Bronx, like other KIPP schools, is free, open to all with no admissions tests. KIPP students are in school for approximately 60 percent more time than most other public school students. KIPP schools

typically run from 7:30 a.m. until 5:00 p.m. on weekdays, every other Saturday, and for three weeks in the summer.

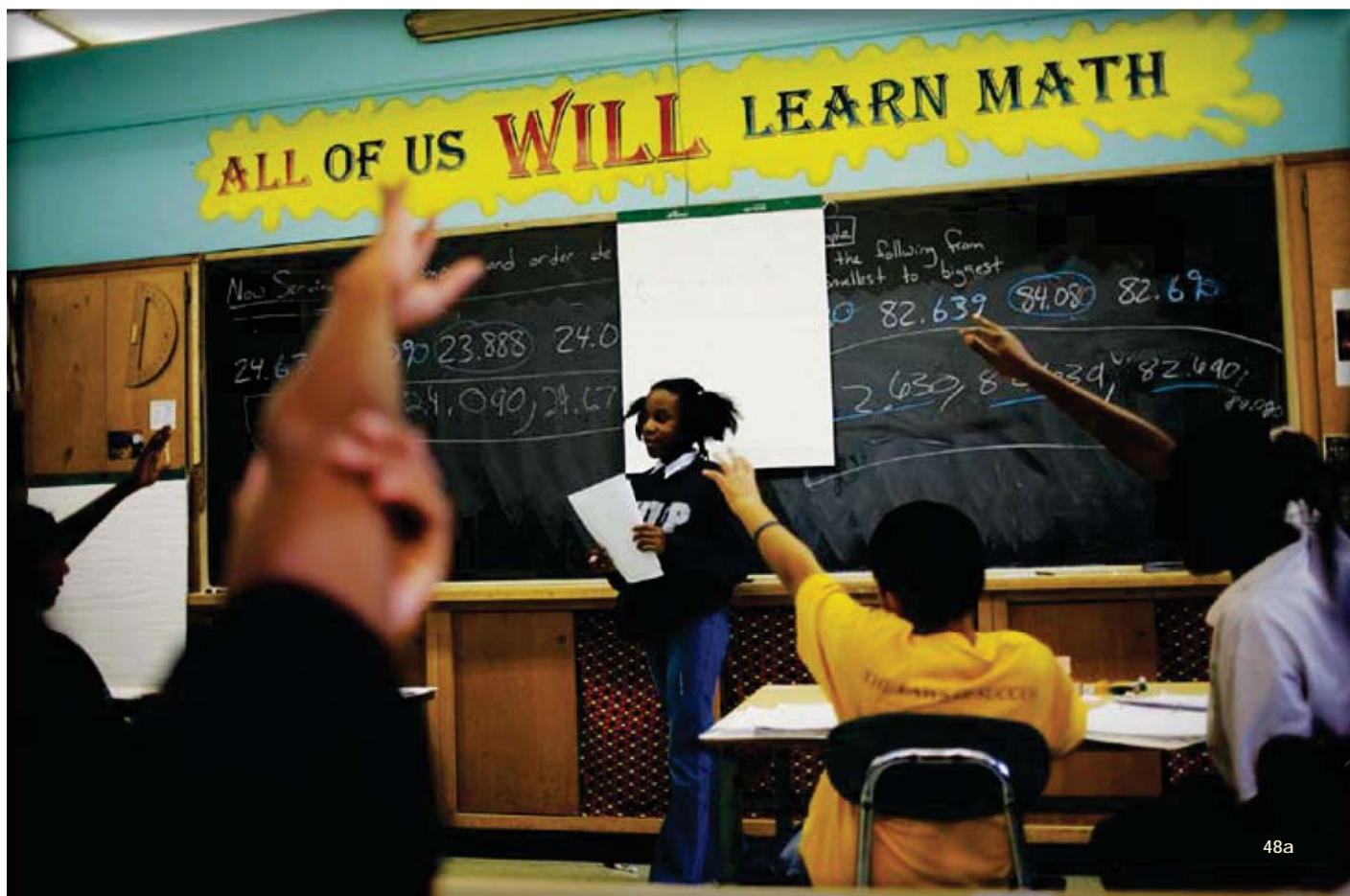
KIPP Academy was one of the first two KIPP schools to be established in the nation--a group of schools that now includes more than 50 schools in seventeen states. KIPP Academy's mission is "to prepare students with the character and academic skills necessary for success in high school, college and the competitive world beyond."

KIPP Academy, like other KIPP schools, has been featured and praised on a variety of national television programs, newspaper and magazine articles. Several foundations have provided tens of millions of

dollars to help replicate KIPP schools. David Levin, one of the two original KIPP founders, started KIPP Academy. Mike Feinberg, the other KIPP co-founder has remained in Houston, where he, like Levin, oversees a group of KIPP schools.

Like other KIPP middle schools, Academy Charter started in 5th grade and grew to include grades 5-8. The KIPP Academy charter shares space in a building with a New York City district public school.

The 2005-2006 school year marked the ninth consecutive year that the KIPP Academy has been the highest performing public middle school in the entire Bronx in terms of reading scores, math scores, and attendance. Kipp's 180-piece string or-



48a



chestra has performed at the Apollo Theatre, the Grammy Awards, and at Carnegie Hall.

RESULTS WITH STUDENTS: Over 91% of KIPP Academy students are now performing at or above the state average in math, and, over 77% are doing the same in reading. For the fourth consecutive year, KIPP Academy ranks in the top 10% of all New York City public schools. At the grade level, 87% of Academy KIPP students score proficient or above in mathematics, compared to 22% of students in the New York City district where the school is located, and 56% of students statewide. Eighty-one percent of the KIPP Academy 7th graders scored proficient or above in English-Language Arts, compared to 21% of district students and 56% of students statewide. At the eighth grade level, 86% of KIPP students score proficient or above in the state's mathematics test, compared to 16% of students in New York City District 7, in which the school is locat-

ed, and 54% of 8th graders statewide. 61% of KIPP students scored proficient in reading, compared with 16% of New York City students and 49% of students in New York State.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, Contact Quinton Vance, principal, 718 665-3555, gvance@kippony.org, 250 East 156th Street, Room 418, Bronx, New York 10451-4722. See also www.kipp.org for information on the more than 50 KIPP schools now operating around the country.



49a and 49c: Music and a focus on reading are vital to KIPP success.

49b: KIPP co-founder David Levin was inspired to create KIPP after teaching fifth grade for three years in Houston in the Teach for America program.

Mesa Arts Academy

Mesa, Arizona

Educators and the Boys and Girls Club of the East Valley in a low-income area of Mesa, Arizona, have created a unique partnership—a charter public school serving about 220 students in grades K through 8 on the campus of the Boys and Girls Club. Working together, they've created a school that ranks among Arizona's best at improving student achievement.

KEY EDUCATIONAL FEATURES. Mesa Arts Academy draws its racially diverse student body from the Mesa area, with more than half of its students coming from low-income, limited-English-speaking families who live near the school. Several gangs operate in the school's neighborhood and the school has worked with local community organizations to reduce their impact.

The Arts Academy faculty believes that active learning—enhanced by dance, drama, music, and visual arts—combined with focused instruction in academics will produce excellent results. The school's handbook

explains, "Classes in the arts and multimedia are the heart of our Arts Academy. We believe all children are gifted and should be provided the opportunity to explore their talents in a safe environment that encourages personal growth."

Student test scores support these beliefs—the state ranks the school at the very top in terms of improving student achievement. Mesa Arts Academy employs a diverse faculty to teach its children. The faculty, which includes certified teachers, art specialists (including professional artists) and senior citizens who bring expertise in music, dance, painting and



50a



50a and 51a: Young artists at work with their teachers.

8th grade who did not. More recently, in 2006, all 8th graders passed both the math and writing sections of AIMS. In addition, the results from AIMS showed an increase in scores among 6th graders, who earned 267 percent points, well above the state total average, in all three subjects—reading, writing, and math. This includes students with special needs whose scores often are excluded from overall school reports.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION. Contact Sue Douglas, Director, Mesa Arts Academy, 221 W. 6th Avenue, Mesa, Ariz. 85210; (480) 844-3965. www.clubzona.com/maa/.

other fields, works along with the staff of the Mesa Boys and Girls Club. In 2006, 4th-8th grade students worked with local artists and staged a professional musical production at the newly opened Mesa Art Center. Each year, a number of students receive awards for their artwork at the Arizona State Fair.

Students are asked to participate in various community service activities. This includes older students tutoring younger students to build stronger skills and a greater sense of community.

KEY ARCHITECTURAL FEATURES. Mesa

Arts Academy students use the Boys and Girls Club's classrooms and facilities, which include two gyms, computer lab, and art room, pre-school, and meeting rooms. The school also has erected several buildings behind the Mesa Boys and Girls Club to provide additional classroom space.

IMPACT ON STUDENTS. In the 2004 school-year, Mesa Academy 8th graders scored highest passing rate on the high stakes AIMS test of all district or charter schools in Arizona. In 2005, all students in grades 5 through 8 passed the math section of AIMS, with the exception of one student in

Minnesota New Country School

Henderson, Minnesota

The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation has given Minnesota New Country School (MNCS) more than \$7 million to help other communities replicate the school. A recent U.S. Department of Education report ranked MNCS as one of the nation's top 10 high schools in closing achievement gaps between low income and more affluent students. These are two more signs of confidence in a unique school that is attracting national attention. MNCS serves about 120 students, grades 7-12. Students come from rural communities approximately 50-80 miles southwest of Minneapolis, Minnesota.

Teachers in the school have organized themselves as a worker's coop under Minnesota's Charter School Legislation. MNCS literally is owned by the people who work there. All MNCS students are required to put together a three, five and 20-year plan. This helps students decide what they are planning to explore in terms of career, post-secondary education and adult life. All students are strongly encouraged to take at least one PSEO course prior to graduation.

Approximately 75% of students do this. MNCS has, in some cases, developed a contract between itself and a post-secondary institution, when the student's test score are not high enough for admission for PSEO, but MNCS staff believes that the student can be successful.

One result of this is that more than half of MNCS students enter a Minnesota Public College or

University on graduation, and less than 15% of them take a remedial course (This puts MNCS in the top 10% of all Minnesota public schools, in terms of small percentages of graduates in public universities who took remedial courses.)

Minnesota New Country students must demonstrate various skills and knowledge in order to graduate. However, the school's program is totally individualized. The school year starts in August with a family/student/advisor conference to plan out the student's program. The student's program is developed during this conference. Students are expected to make public presentations three times a year, describing some of the things they are learning.

The school has no required courses, no grades and no bells. MNCS has approximately one computer for each student. Students each have



their own workspace, which includes a desk, computer and personal storage space, which can be decorated with pictures of the students' friends, family and other items of personal interest.

Students' programs consist of independent and small group study, internships and apprenticeships. Some of the students have become so sophisticated with computers that local or area businesses have hired them to develop and maintain the businesses' web sites.

The head of the Gates Foundation's Education Program has called this school "one of the most exciting high schools in the country," because it carries out so much of emerging research about school size, thoughtful use of technology, and appropriate programs for secondary students.

Minnesota New Country School began in 1994. For the first four years, the school operated from three store fronts on Main Street of LeSueur, Minnesota (known to some as "the Valley of the Jolly Green Giant"). In 1998 the school moved several miles to its new home in Henderson, Minnesota.

MNCS faculty, parents and students helped design the new building. It is primarily a large, open space with several rooms along the sides, to house small groups of people who need a quiet space for meeting. In the center of the large open main room is a stage, behind which stands a large silo. The silo represents the architectural heritage common to many of the school's students. MNCS has helped establish the EdVisions Coop (www.edvisions.coop). This

group has helped establish a number of other schools using the MNCS model.

IMPACT ON STUDENTS. MNCS students have shown consistent improvement on standardized tests required by the state of Minnesota. These include reading, writing and math tests that students must take to graduate from high school. MNCS students rank above state averages on these tests.

The school also has developed ways to measure writing, Self confidence and public speaking skills. Their students also have shown improvement on these measures. Finally, MNCS ranks in the top 10 percent of more than 300 Minnesota high schools, in terms of the low percentage of its graduates attending Minnesota public colleges and universities who take remedial courses.



52a, 53a, and 53b: Each MNCS student has a desk and a computer as well as the opportunity to participate in a variety of hands-on projects. Students make presentations three times a year to share what they have learned.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, see www.newcountryschool.com, or call 507-248-3353, or write MNCS, PO Box 488, Henderson, Minnesota 56044.

Northfield Community Resource Center

Northfield, Minnesota

WIt's a dream come true." That's how the Northfield, Minnesota Senior Citizens Center director, describes the Northfield's Community Resource Center. Opened in fall, 2000, the building represents a cooperative effort among five major groups, including the local school district, to create a \$5.5 million building which provides services, and opportunities for everyone from infants to senior citizens. By working together, the groups created far more than any of them could have done by themselves.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION: Discussions about a new home for Northfield Senior Citizens started about fourteen years ago. Over the last several years, a variety of

groups joined the seniors to plan the center. The five major partners in the Center are

- the City of Northfield (which is the managing partner)
- Northfield Public Schools (which operates early childhood programs in the building)
- Northfield Senior Citizens, Inc., which operates a vast array of services in its wing
- Three Rivers Community Action Center, which operate a Head Start Center in the building, and a Child Care program serving children ranging in age from 6 months to five years
- Northfield Community Action Center, which operates a Clothes Closet, Food Shelf and family counseling programs in the building.

The Executive Director of Three Rivers Community Action, says "Of all the public private partnerships I've been involved in, this has been the most fun." He pointed out that the planning group over-

came many obstacles, including some residents who wondered if folks of different ages could get along in the same building. Now that the building is open, the answer appears to be clearly, "Yes!"

The former Northfield Superintendent who is now Executive Director of the Minnesota Association of School Administrators says: "This process of working together, deciding our organizations could help each other, is almost as important as the final product. Everyone gains when people work together like this."

A famous sign just outside of town used to read "Welcome to Northfield: Home of Cows, Colleges and Contentment." It's time to add another "c" to that sign: cooperation. Northfield shows us how it can be done.

ARCHITECTURAL FEATURES: The building has two stories and four wings. It covers more than 58,000 square feet. The Center covers about five acres. It has 84 rooms including a swimming pool, exercise room, cafeteria and eight conference/meeting





rooms. The four wings are designated Human Services, Youth Services, Human Services and Senior.

Originally the school district operated a small secondary alternative

school and some early childhood programs in its section of the building. The alternative school has been moved. Currently the district's Community Services Division is

located there. The district also uses the community center for its Early Childhood, GED and adult basic education/English as a second language classes. The Youth Wing is also used four days a week for Head Start classes.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION,

www.ci.northfield.mn.us/parksandrec/nrcrc, write to Northfield Community Resource Center, 1651 Jefferson Parkway, Northfield, Minnesota 55057.

Perham Area Community Center (PACC)

Perham, Minnesota

The Perham Area Community Center (PACC) was in part, a result of failed referendum for new school district buildings in the late 1980's. Perham is a town of about 2,700 people in Northwestern Minnesota. The building is located immediately next to the town's secondary school. PACC is a 66,000 square foot building with several multi-purpose spaces.

Before PACC was built, physical fitness facilities in the town's secondary school were more than forty-five years old, and almost certainly not worth the expense of expanding and improving. Several community leaders analyzed the failed referendum vote and concluded that the public did not want to pay for a new gym

54a, 55a, 55b, and 55c: Five major organizations, including Northfield's city government and school district, joined forces to create a state-of-the-art facility serving the entire community. Sharing space allows students to learn from, as well as to help, senior citizens and infants.

and swimming pool.

At the same time, several local businesses felt that the town, and their businesses, would be more attractive if there were an up to date exercise and physical fitness center. The city, local businesses and the school district joined to create PACC. These include

- Two racquet ball/walley-ball courts (similar, but not identical to volleyball)
- A roller-skating rink
- A swimming pool used by families, students and the broader community
- State of the art physical fitness facility with a variety of weights and aerobic exercise equipment
- Whirlpool, kids pool, wading pool, large swimming pool and sauna
- Dance studio
- Walking/running track
- Several large gyms

Perham High School's Physical Education classes use the facility, which can simultaneously meet school and community needs. For example some community members come in over a lunch hour, to play basketball, volleyball or some other sport.

The building is open from early in the morning until late at night - on weekdays, for example, from 6 AM to 9 PM, and many hours on Saturday and Sunday. Many community members use the facility, along with the students.

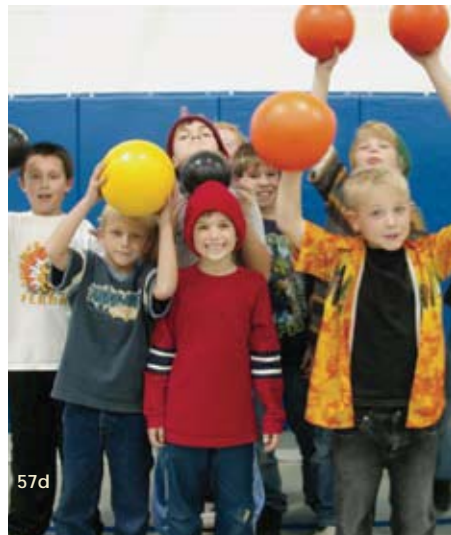
IMPACT ON STUDENTS: The high school athletic director notes that "It was clear that we could not put up a terrific facility like this by ourselves. When the city and school district came together, it made this project possible. I can't imagine a better outcome. It's worked out even better than I imagined."

Perham has a higher percentage of its graduates attending Minnesota public colleges and universities than the state average (57% - 49%) and a small percentage of its graduates who enter Minnesota public colleges and universities taking remedial courses (34% in Perham versus 36% statewide). Almost 1/3 (29% of Perham's students are eligible for free/reduced lunch, compared to the state average of 17%. 98% of Perham's students graduate from high school in 2004, 100% of them graduated in 2005, and 99% graduated in 2006. It is not appropriate to make a direct tie between PACC and the high school's above record. However, it is possible to say that PACC represents a creative, collaborative community that helps make the high school more effective, and helps make students feel considerate support and encouragement.

FOR MORE INFORMATION. Contact Kevin Nelson, Manager, pacc@eot.com, 218-346-7222, www.346pacc.com



57a, 57b, 57c: By working together the Perham School district, city government and local businesses were able to construct a community center that is far better equipped, and open many more hours, than any of the organizations could operate by themselves.



Perspectives Charter School

Chicago, Illinois

Located just south of Chicago's downtown business area, Perspectives Charter School is one of the city's most effective public high schools, open to all kinds of students. The school serves 150 students, grades 6 through 12. Co-founded by veteran Chicago teachers, the school uses its small size, high expectations, and extensive community involvement to produce excellent results.

KEY EDUCATIONAL FEATURES. More than 70 percent of the students are from low-income families. The school begins each fall with individual conferences to set individual student goals and help the school's faculty learn more about the students and their families. The five guiding principles are:

- a disciplined life,
- celebrating differences,
- parent involvement,
- relevant and rigorous curriculum,
- and field studies and community engagement.

Perspectives help students make connections between the classroom and community. Students constantly read about people who have made a difference in the world and learn how they can do the same. In addition to classes, students are expected to participate in internships, apprenticeships, and community service projects that involve work with the



dozens of nearby Chicago business, community, and advocacy groups. Each year the faculty goes on a two-day retreat and is paid to work the entire month of August.

KEY ARCHITECTURAL FEATURES. After several years of success in an old, former furniture warehouse, Perspectives moved to a new, beautiful building just south of "the Loop" in Chicago. The location gives Perspectives students ready access to the extraordinary range of internship and apprenticeship opportunities available in a downtown area like Chicago's. In August, 2007, because of its demonstrated success, Perspectives opened a second campus in Chicago. The campus currently houses 270 7th and 9th grade students. Plans call for this second campus to eventually house three small secondary schools, with a total campus enrollment of approximately 1500.

IMPACT ON STUDENTS. Over 90 percent of all Perspectives seniors have graduated, and 100 percent of all graduates have been accepted to at least one two- or four- year college or university. Perspectives have an 89 percent graduation rate since 2001, according to the Illinois State Board of Education. In 2005, Perspectives ranked second among non-selective Chicago Public Schools in graduating freshmen within five years. According to National Student Clearinghouse data, 58 percent of the class of 2004 and 55 percent of the class of 2005 are still enrolled in college.

This year Perspectives students continued to outscore the district on the ISAT, with 67.8 percent of Perspectives middle school students meeting or exceeding state standards. The state assessment data is backed by strong indicators of growth according to the Stanford



58a, 59a, 69b, and 59c: Perspectives' small size, high expectations, and individualized program produce excellent results. Student work is featured throughout the building. Located near "the Loop," Chicago's famed downtown area, Perspectives students are able to combine classroom work with community exploration projects, internships, and mentorships.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION. Contact Perspectives Charter School, 1930 S. Archer Avenue , Chicago, Ill. 60616 ; (312)224-7400. www.perspectivescs.org

Diagnostic, administered to all grades in fall and spring. Students grew an average of 17 months in math in high school, and 23 months in middle school. In reading, students

showed 17 months worth of gains.

School of Environmental Studies "The Zoo School"

Apple Valley, Minnesota

The School of Environmental Studies, a public school of choice, serves about 400 high school students. It's located on grounds of the Minnesota Zoo in Apple Valley, a Minneapolis-St. Paul suburb. Opened in 1995, the school has been named a "New American High School" by the U.S. Department of Education because of its innovative programs, and its success.

KEY FEATURES: The "Zoo School" enrolls approximately 400 juniors and seniors. The school is open to all kinds of students, and enrolls a cross section of the suburban district. It is a school of choice. The vast majority of its students say they select the school

because they want to attend a small, more individualized school, not because they plan a career in environmental science. Many students report that they attend the school because they are "looking for a sense of community, and a feeling of connectedness with other students.

Students take part in many interdisciplinary courses, and many students participate in internships and apprenticeships, as well as community service. Many students travel around the country to study environmental issues "on site."

OTHER IMPORTANT FEATURES: Sharing space with the Zoo permits research with animals, opportunities to help plan exhibits, discussions with zoo officials, and many other opportunities.

The Zoo also has loaned the school many artifacts from its collection. Each student has a "personal work station" including a desk and chair, which students decorate with pictures of friends, and often information about their hobbies or interests.

Student work is assessed by community professionals, including businesspeople, scientists and politicians, as well as teachers. Students often create material that they place on the school's website as part of learning to share information with others.

SES is divided into four "academic houses, of approximately 100 students each. There are two houses for juniors, and two for seniors. As the school explains, "During house-time the subjects of Language Arts (English and communications), environmental science, and social studies are applied to the study of complex issues related to the environment."

ARCHITECTURAL FEATURES. The building was constructed for the district on the campus of the Minnesota Zoo. The architect used the same per student figures as the district had used on other, 2000 student high schools. This means that building construction costs are the same, per pupil, as other much larger high schools in the



60a



60b



60c

district. The school combines large and small spaces, which are designed to be flexible, so they can be used as the school needs. In cooperation with the city, school district and a local electrical company, the school is constructing a tower to help generate electricity from wind and solar sources.

IMPACT ON STUDENTS. Students at the school have compiled an excellent record, with high percentages going to college, good test scores, and few discipline problems. "Zoo School" students' records compare well with those of students who graduate from other schools in the district.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, www.district196.org/SES/ or contact: Dan Bodette, Principal, Minnesota School of Environmental Studies, 12155 Johnny Cake Road, Apple Valley, Mn. 55124 952 431-8750,

60a, 60b, and 60c: Located on the campus of Minnesota's state zoo, the School for Environmental Science provides many opportunities for students to develop strong academic skills and an in-depth understanding of zoo animals.

The MET School

Providence, RI

The Met is founded on the belief that students must be actively engaged in their education. With help from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, MET founders, visionary and veteran educators Dennis Littky and Elliot Washor have expanded the school from its original campus of 4 small schools in Providence, Rhode Island, to more than 50 secondary schools in 20 states.

The Met's original campus in Providence includes four small schools that share a fitness center, a performance space, a culinary kitchen, health center, and a state-of-the-art technology center. At the core of the curriculum is the Learning through Interests program, which helps students find opportunities to learn in real-world settings through meaningful projects. The Met pairs students with adult community mentors who share their career interests and passions. Two days a week,

students intern at these worksites and take on projects that benefit that organization. Back at school, students work with their advisors to build and reinforce the skills and knowledge needed to complete those projects.

Met internships are designed to allow students to apply their academic knowledge and meet their learning goals, rather than train them for specific jobs. The Met has a database of 2,000 internship sites. Since 1996, Met students have worked with more than 1,000 adults in the community. More than 800 adults have participated in The Met's Learning Through Interests program.

Popular LTI sites include: Audubon Society, Brown University, Channel 10 News, L&A Architecture, Music One, New England Tech, New England Aquarium, Office of the Attorney General, Providence Mayor's Office, Providence Film Commission, Providence Public Schools, Rhode Island Hospital, Trinity Repertory Company, Vincent D. Morgera Law Firm, YMCA, and Youth In Action.

Starting in 9th grade, students are organized into advisories, groups of



61a



15 individuals in the same grade level and led by an advisor (or teacher), who stays with them for all four years of high school. The advisor, unlike a traditional teacher, guides each student's learning in every academic area and helps the group develop a strong sense of trust and teamwork.

Most Met students take at least one course at a local college (such as Brown University, Rhode Island School of Design, Providence College, Rhode Island College, and the Community College of Rhode Island). Advisories organize frequent college visits during junior and senior years. In 12th grade, students are required to complete three to five college applications along with a college portfolio.

The Met has a College Transition Team that develops relationships with colleges and assists in student placement but also supports students as they transition to college or other post-secondary opportunities. This team helps students navigate the system of higher education - whether it's helping them find the academic support they may need in college,

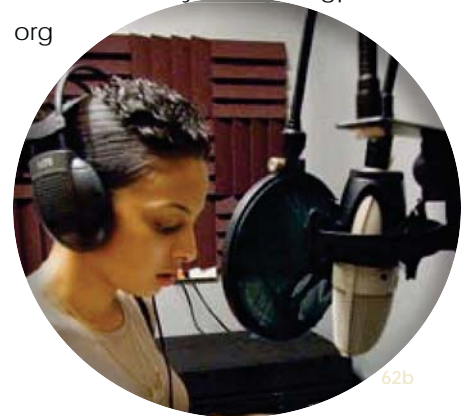
running workshops for students about financial aid and scholarship opportunities, or hosting reunions for alumni and their families.

IMPACT ON STUDENTS: The Met has consistently ranked among Rhode Island's top high schools for attendance, graduation rates, parent involvement, and school climate. Since graduating its first class in 2000, the Met has maintained a 98% college acceptance rate. The school reports that over 80% of 2007 graduates are enrolled in college. A recent MET survey found that approximately 74% of Met alumni who enrolled in college are either still there or have graduated. Most Met students are first-generation college-goers.

Students have been accepted to colleges around the country, including: Brown University, Hampshire College, Howard University, College of the Holy Cross, Mount Holyoke College, New York University, The New School, Northeastern University, Oberlin College, Parsons School of Design, Providence College, Reed College, Rhode Island School of

Design, Sarah Lawrence College, Tufts University and University of Chicago.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, please see: www.themetschool.org, 401.752.3400, Met Center, 362 Dexter Street, Providence RI 02907
Rodrick Echols, Communications Coordinator, The Met, 325 Public Street, Providence (Justice 214)
Office Phone (401) 752-3499
Or Dennis Littky, dlittky@bigpicture.org



61a, 62a,b and c The Met focuses on an individualized plan for each student that helps students explore the community and career possibilities. This program helps most of The Met's students enter and succeed in some form of post-secondary education.

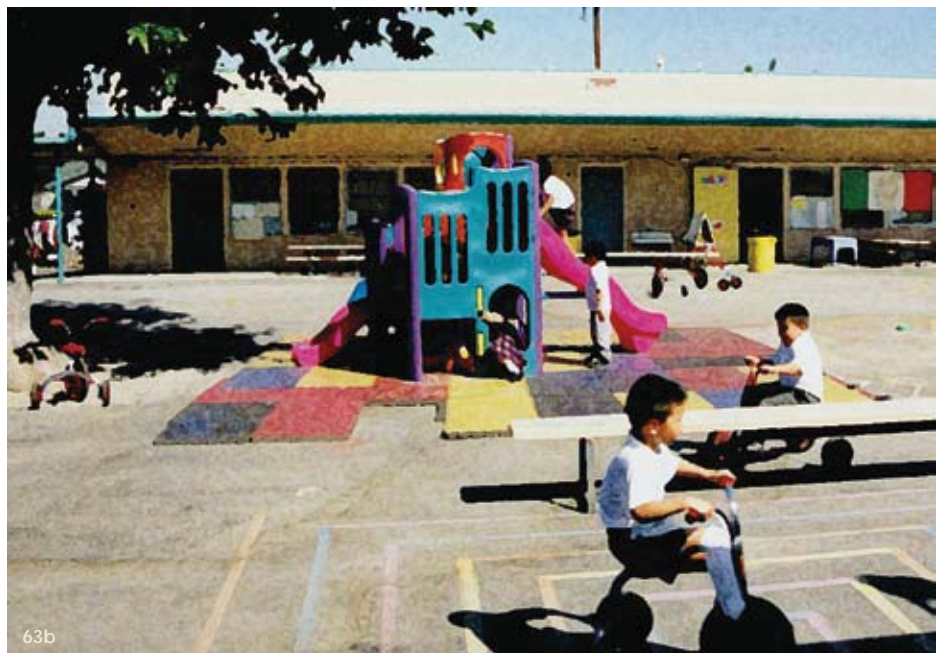
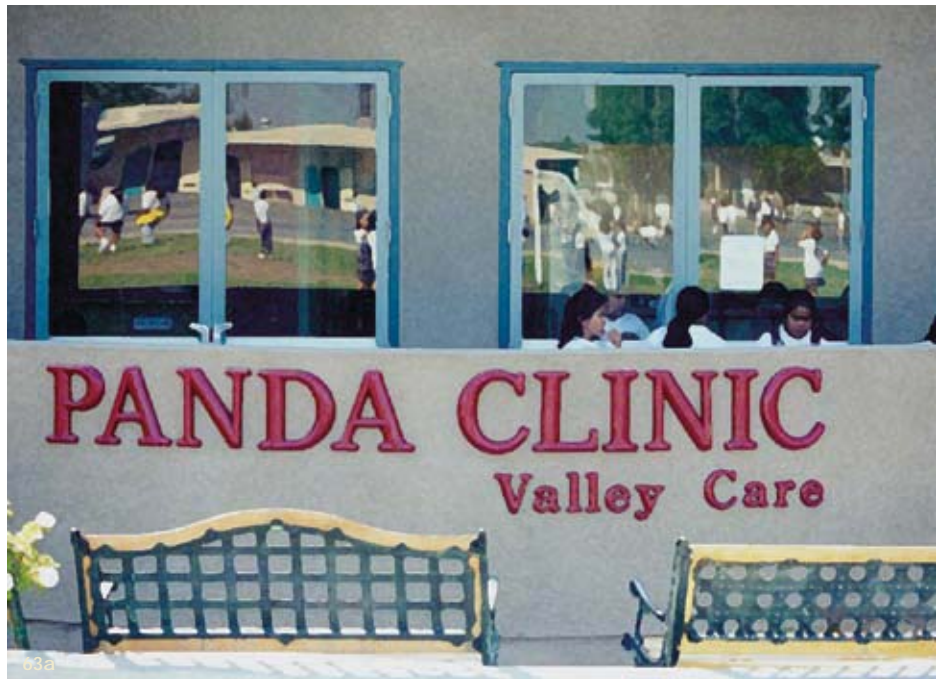
Vaughn Next Century Learning Center

San Fernando, California

Vaughn Next Century Learning Center represents the kind of dramatic improvements Americans hope their schools can accomplish. In a Los Angeles neighborhood known for its high poverty, crime and violence, educators, families and community groups worked together to produce major improvements in students' knowledge, skills and behavior. The school has been named a California Distinguished School and won a National Blue Ribbon award from the U.S. Department of Education.

KEY ACADEMIC FEATURES. When it converted to charter status in 1993, Vaughn was a Los Angeles district elementary school with very low achievement. Since then, the school has shown steady, significant improvement in academic achievement. It also has expanded from an elementary school of about 1100 students to a campus of schools serving more than 2,300 students, pre-K-14th grade. One hundred percent of the students are eligible for free or reduced lunch, and about 80 percent are from families where English is not spoken at home. More than 90 percent of the students are Hispanic and more than 60 percent of the faculty are Hispanic.

The school converted to charter status in 1993, and uses its flexibility in



many ways. Vaughn has reduced class size, extended the school year to 200 instructional days, and pays teachers more than the typical LA school offers, along with incentives for improved student performance.

Vaughn employs several people who help families resolve challenges they face, and help families understand how they can help their children achieve.

KEY ARCHITECTURAL FEATURES.

Vaughn has the single story bungalow architecture common to urban southern California public schools. After it converted to charter status, the school reached out to a number of organizations and was able to add several state-of-the-art and environmentally-friendly new buildings to the campus. A medical clinic, constructed and operated by the county health service, serves Vaughn students and their families. Another is a new library and classroom building, constructed in collaboration with a local university that uses classrooms after school and on weekends for college courses. Some of the new classrooms sit on land where just a few years ago, "crack houses," stood, where drug dealers and users met. Currently, the charter school operates 4 campuses (a primary center, an elementary school, a middle school and a high school), all located within a 3-block radius. The high school (with concurrent community college studies) focuses on international studies and world languages. All high school studies take Mandarin Chinese as a 4-year language course with overseas travel opportunities.

IMPACT ON STUDENTS. In 2006, Vaughn received a "10", the highest rating, on the statewide rating system. Since 1999, students' overall performance on the California Academic Performance Index, has increased by more than 260 points. A study conducted by a federally funded school improvement organization, West Ed, for the Los Angeles School Board found that over a five year period,

Vaughn students made significant gains in reading, writing and math. The study noted that Vaughn also improved its rank in all subject areas. The school also has reduced mobility among its students.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, contact Yvonne Chan, Principal, Vaughn Next Century Learning Center, 1330 Vaughn Street, San Fernando, California 91340, 818 896-7461.

63a and 63b: Vaughn shares space with a medical clinic and higher education institution. Sharing space allows the school to better serve students and their families.

Withrow University High School

Cincinnati, Ohio

In a speech at the National School Boards Association annual conference several years ago, Melinda Gates singled out Withrow University as one of the finest high schools in the nation.

Withrow enrolls more than 700 students. More than 90% are African-American, and about half are low income. Yet the Ohio State Department of Education rates the school "Excellent," the top of 5 ratings in Ohio. (Excellent, Effective, Continuous Improvement, Academic Watch, Academic Emergency.)

Withrow also has strong attendance and graduation rates, with more than 80% of students entering 9th grade graduating four years later. Before graduating, students must do 60 hours of community service, and complete a resume. "We want students ready for life," explained Principal Sharon Johnson. "Strong skills are important. So are the right attitudes about helping and working with others."

Withrow is one of two strong small schools within a larger building, created with help from a Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation grant to the Cincinnati Public Schools. Founding principal Sharon Johnson points to several key elements as helping explain the school's success.

1. The goal of the school is clear – help each student be well prepared



for a college or university when she/he graduates.

2. Withrow has a summer “bridge” program with Xavier, a local university. Students take courses there, partly to improve skills and partly to gain the feeling they ‘belong’ on some post-secondary campus after graduation.

3. The school sets explicit goals for improvement each year.

4. The school separates young men and young women in academic classes (Language Arts, Social Studies, Math and Science).

5. All students wear uniforms.

6. The principal works hard to attract the teachers she believes share the school’s attitude of no excuses.

7. The school shares space with a social service agency, FamiliesForward. This agency helps resolve issues and challenges facing students and their families.

8. Results of state tests are posted in



the building, and discussed regularly with students, faculty and families.

RESULTS WITH STUDENTS: The Ohio Department of Education rating of excellence is based in part on strong attendance and outstanding test scores. For 2005-2006,

91% of Withrow’s 10th grade students



passed Ohio's reading test, compared to 82% in Cincinnati and 78.4% in comparable Ohio districts.

95% of Withrow 10th graders passed Ohio's writing test (82% in the district and 79% in comparable districts).

84% of Withrow 10th graders passed math, (76% in Cincinnati and 66% in similar districts).

74% of Withrow sophomores passed science, (57% in district and 47% in comparable districts).

83% of Withrow sophomores passed social studies (71.4% in district and 61% in comparable districts).

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, Contact Sharon Johnson, Withrow University High School, 2520 Madison Road, Cincinnati, Ohio 45208, 513-363-9200, or see <http://withrowuniversityhs.cps-k12.org/>

65 a, b and c. Withrow University emphasizes quality in everything students do - academics, music and sports.

YESPrep

Houston, Texas

YES" stands for "youth engaged in service." Students also are required to provide community service one Saturday per month. The community service projects are designed to help students learn that they can make a real difference and that part of their lives should be devoted to "giving back."

The school features a longer day, mandatory Saturday classes and three-week summer school in July. Its theme is "Whatever it takes!"

Eighty percent of the approximately 700 students at the original YESPrep campus, YESPrep - Southeast, are from low-income families, and ninety-five percent are either Hispanic or African American. Eighty-five percent of YESPrep students are first-generation college bound. Most students enter the

school at least one year behind in math and English.

Founded in 1998, YESPrep is a charter, open to all students, with no admissions tests. The school requires each student to take at least one college-level class in order to graduate. The school also requires each student to apply to, and be accepted by, at least one four-year college or university. The campuses have four alumni who have graduated from college and returned to YESPrep as instructors . . . two from Stanford, one from Columbia, and one from the University of Houston.

YES students have been accepted at 216 colleges and universities around the country including Yale, Georgetown, Brown, Columbia, University of Pennsylvania, Stanford, Rice and University of Texas at Austin.

Collectively, YES students have earned over \$17.5 million in scholarships & financial aid. Seventy-eight percent of YES alumni have graduated or are still enrolled in a four-year



66a



67a



67b

college (compared to the national retention average of 50% for all ethnic groups and 22% for low-income students).

In 1995, YES Prep founder Chris Barbic earned Houston Independent

School District's Outstanding Young Educator, an award given to the district's best teacher under the age of 29. "These are mission-driven folks who believe in what we're trying to do in getting low-income kids

through college," Barbic said of his staff. Barbic and many other YES staff have been involved in the "Teach for America" program.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, contact YES - Southeast (the original YES Prep school described above) is at 353 Crenshaw Road, 713 910-2510. www.yesprep.org

66a: YES Prep students must participate at least once a month in a community service project. 67a & 67b: YES Prep has succeeded in preparing the vast majority of its inner city, low income students for college. Some of them have returned to teach in the school.

Resources

NATIONAL CLEARINGHOUSE FOR EDUCATIONAL FACILITIES (NCEF). NCEF is the U.S. Department of Education's information center for people who plan, design, build, operate, and maintain K-12 schools. It maintains an information hotline and hosts a Web site with thousands of on-line resources on school facilities. <http://www.ncef.org>

CENTER FOR SCHOOL CHANGE. Hubert H. Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs, University of Minnesota. The Center conducts research and publishes information about creating smaller, personalized learning environments, including information on the Gates Smaller High School Learning Communities Project and the Minnesota Charter School Resource Project. <http://www.centerforschoolchange.org>

American Institute of Architects Committee on Architecture for Education (AIA/CAE). The AIA's professional interest group on issues related to pre-kindergarten through university level educational facilities. http://aia.org/cae_default

Center for Collaborative Education. Based in Boston, CCE helped create and grow Boston Pilot Schools, which are small district public schools with focus, accountability and autonomy. Now also working in Los Angeles. www.ccebos.org

Center for Educational Innovation-Public Education Association. The Center has more than twenty years of experience in converting large school buildings into small schools. It publishes information and conducts workshops on converting schools. <http://cei-pea.org>

Coalition for Community Schools. The Coalition works toward improving education and helping students learn and grow. It offers a range of supports and opportunities for children, youth, families, and communities. <http://www.communityschools.org>

Council of Educational Facility Planners, International (CEFPI). The Council is an international professional association whose members—individuals, institutions, and corporations—are actively involved in planning, designing, building and equipping schools and colleges. <http://www.cefpi.org>

Programme on Educational Building (PEB).

Based in Paris, PEB operates within the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development to promote the international exchange of ideas, research, and experience in the field of educational facilities. www.oecd.org/departement/0,3355,en_2649_35961311_1_1_1_1_1,00.html

National Alliance for Public Charter School.

The National Alliance provides extensive information about the more than 4000 charter public schools serving more than 1 million students. www.publiccharters.org

Small Schools Workshop. A group of organizers, educators and researchers based in Chicago. The Workshop collaborates with teachers, principals, and parents to create new, small, innovative learning communities in public schools. Its Web site includes an archive of articles, numerous links, a bookshelf, project listings, a calendar, and a directory of small schools. <http://www.smallschoolsworkshop.org>

U.S. Charter Schools. An information clearinghouse and on-line community developed by WestEd in partnership with the U.S. Department of Education and the California State University Institute for Education Reform. Its Web site provides state and school profiles, and information resources. <http://www.uscharterschools.org>

PHOTO CREDITS

The authors are grateful to the following individuals and organizations for providing the photographs for this report. In all cases, a photo illustration has been created based on the original photograph provided by those listed below.

Fanning/Howey Associates, photos 16a, 19a-b. Michael Greenlar, Buffalo King photo 33a. Charles Massey, photos 34a-b. Tiffany Green, photo 52a. Minnesota New Country School Students, photos 53a-b. Zeke Montanez, Vaughn Next Century Learning Center, photos 17a, 63a-b. Joe Nathan, Center for School Change, Humphrey Institute, University of Minnesota, photos, 7a, 10b, 26a-c, 30a-b, 31a-b, 32a, 34a-b, 37a, 38a-b, 39a, 40a, 46a, 47a-b, 50a, 51a, 53c, 60a-c, 62a. Northfield Community Resource Center, photos 54a, 55a-c. Mark Real, Children's Defense Fund of Ohio, photos 6a, 10a, 13a, 14a, 41a, 42a-b, 43a, 44a, 45a. Diana Shulla-Cose, Perspectives Charter School, photos 59a, DesignShare.com photo 58a, 59b. Sarah Woodhead, AIA, photos 20a-b, 21a-b. KIPP New York for photos. Neville Elder, photo 28a. Kevin Kelley, photos 27a-b, 28b. Harold Shapiro, photo 27c. Staff from Codman Academy, photo 41a. Cesar Chavez

Academy, photos 9a, 36a-d. KIPP New York, photos 5a, 25a, 48a, 49a-c. Perham Community Center, photos 56a, 57a-d. The MET, photos 11b-d, 61a, 62a-c. Withrow University, photos 65a-c. YES Prep, photos Cover, 11a, 66a, 67a-b. Photo montages are based on images used and credited elsewhere in the report.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Joe Nathan directs the Center for School Change at the University of Minnesota's Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs. Parents, professional groups and students have given him awards for his work as a public school teacher and administrator. The National Governors' Association hired him to coordinate a project on what state governors should do to improve public schools. Twenty-one state legislatures and eight Congressional Committees have invited him to testify about various aspects of school improvement. He has written three books and edited another. Various publications, including USA Today and the Wall Street Journal have published guest columns he wrote. For many years, Nathan wrote a weekly column published by the St. Paul, Rochester, Duluth and Hibbing daily newspapers. More than 20 Minnesota newspapers regularly carry a weekly column he writes. Married for more than 30 years to a St. Paul Public Schools teacher, he has been PTA president at the public schools their children attended, and served on the Minnesota PTA Board. B.A. from Carleton College, M.A. and Ph.D. from the University of Minnesota.

Sheena Thao is an outreach and research specialist at the Center for School Change. She is a 2006 graduate of Carleton College with a BA in Psychology and Educational Studies. As a bi-lingual Hmong woman, Thao has written articles for various publications, spoke to various groups and translated material about different education opportunities from English to Hmong. Her work at the Center for School Change includes increasing minority family knowledge of, and student participation in, various college preparation and college level programs for high school students (including Minnesota's Post Secondary Enrollment Options program, in which she participated as a high school student).